# The Heart of Washington

Dorothea Heness Knox

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"And here is truth, but, an' it please thee not,
"Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me."
—*Tennyson.*

By

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NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY
1909

# CHAPTER I

## 1747

*"To doubt her fairness, were to want an eye;*
*To doubt her pureness, were to want a heart."*
*—Tennyson.*

"Truly, a very proper maiden, James; and not lacking in good graces, but she wants style; firstly, she does not swear, which may be a distinguished virtue, but is not of the fashion."

"Ah, Thomas, ye should have heard her last fall, when she creased a fine mare on the prairies, and a cursed Pawnee ran up, securing the beast and running off, filly and all, before Shen could reload."

The attention of the two speakers was directed toward a maiden seated some ten feet away with a party of card players; but though among them, she was not of them; nothing could form a sharper contrast than the difference between her slender, drooping form, and the stiff, somewhat showy misses about her.

The women of Washington's boyhood were never spoken of as graceful, lovely, or even lovable. All these things they might be, but they did not consider them an advantage. To be

sure, this thirteen-year old woman—a girl "came out" at that age in Virginia—had attracted more men in a five days' visit than all the rest of the group put together, but that was a subject for wonder, not for study. The girls of that time wished to be stately, and "who could be majestic in clinging willlowy chiffon"? Majestic, Esther Denis was not; but dignified, certainly; even though her dresses would not "stand alone."

"Pest! The Devil's in thy luck," snapped a pretty damsel at the far end of the card table, throwing her bracelet across to Esther, who gave one of her rare smiles, and rose with the others.

"I'm sure 'tis wicked to stake aught on cards," went on the loser. "Cousin George says 'tis monstrous; but I dare swear he said that after playing with thee."

As she ended, George himself entered, with his brother Laurence Washington, and the group fell to curtsying, all save the gallants, who gathered up the cards and began talking among themselves of Fitzhugh's blooded mare who broke her neck in "ye stall."

As Washington passed from one to another you might notice nothing but the gravest veneration and formal courtesy on his handsome

young face; save when the slim maid, in soft gauze, slipped in the deepest of curtsies quite to the floor; and even then, only a flush and a slight awkwardness as he returned the salutation.

"Cousin George is shocked at such 'going all of a heap,'" whispered she of the bracelet to Constance Montresser.

"Lud, ninny, he's no such thing; and as for me, I think 'tis monstrous pretty, and so dost thou; but we could never do it in these barbarous stays, that cut me even when I bow; and curtsy—jemminy!—if I were to fall over I could never get up, but there I'd lie, like a pig in a stovepipe."

"The minx has all that is best of three nations," Sir James Denis was saying, smiling as grandfathers are wont when praising their grandchildren.

"Why, may I ask, dost call her Shen, Jamey?" demanded Lord Fairfax.

"Well, Thomas, the Indians named her Shenandoah, which is a long name, and not much in itself, but hath a goodly meaning, being 'Daughter of the stars.'"

"A queer freak of thine, having numbers of names for thyself and all else; but—" and Lord Fairfax ended with a shrug of his lean

shoulders and strode away to greet his favorite, George.

"Shen," said Sir Denis, advancing toward the others, "give us a song. I have not heard thee sing since we left the wilderness."

Esther made no answer, but dropping him one of her lithe curtsies, which made other than "Cousin George" flush in the watching, she passed to the harpsichord, and began to sing without comment or embarrassment. She chose an old Scotch ballad; oddly enough, written to a French girl. Sir Denis was very fond of telling how her mother—who was no kin of his—had inherited the lay from a great-great-grandmother, Francise; how a Scotch courtier had written it to this fair ancestress in the days when Queen Mary was in France; and how, when the verses had come to the eye of the royal beauty, the Queen had torn the paper twain and stamped her pretty foot in a fine rage. The ballad was good in its way, despite the fact that it called Francise "a lowland beauty"; but then France is lower on the map than Scotland, and the song was "damned fine," so said Lord Fairfax.

The applause was cut short by a great stir without. The yelping of dogs and a clatter of coach wheels announced the coming of Mrs.

Mason. The widow drove well attended, and evidently prepared for a long stay. Three postilions urged on, or rather held in, the spanking team of six good horses which dragged the clumsy coach up the drive. There was a vast deal of luggage. In the distance one might see young George Mason riding up at full gallop, having held back, no doubt, to make a fine dash near the doorway, charging, as it were, the hearts of all the fair damsels therein assembled, for the entire household, from Mammy to Master, had crowded out to welcome this honored guest. All save Esther and George, the latter leaning over the harpsichord, and getting hopelessly entangled in a simple question he was trying to ask the maid before him. So different he thought her from those he had been wont to know, with their high, crimped hair tied with ribbons and artificial flowers. Esther's knot of brown and gold coiled low on the neck, with no visible means of support, was a source of constant delight and wonderment to her trembling admirer.

"Thou are welcome to Bellevue, welcome indeed!" exclaimed William Fairfax as he ushered in Mrs. Mason and fairly jostled his wealthy English relative, Thomas, out of the doorway. "And just in time for supper."

Supper over, the younger element began to play "Buttons." It chanced that, as it was a kissing game, Esther soon found herself about to undergo a rigorous salute from George Mason.

"Sir," she remarked quietly, "I kiss no kisses."

"Heigho, what's this!" exclaimed Lord Fairfax, much amused.

"And why not, Miss Modesty; art teething? 'Tis the game."

To the utter surprise of all, instead of weeping, or flying into a pet as girls are wont to do, Mistress Esther only curtsied, eyes downcast. But as she rose the eyes suddenly shot a saucy look of deviltry at his Lordship, and Sir Denis muttered, "There's mischief afoot." No one heard him, however. My Lord and George Mason together cried "Good," and the latter made a move toward Esther. No sooner had he reached her side than a cuff from Washington sent him sliding along the polished floor, in no pleasant manner. But the attention of all was attracted to Esther herself, who turned upon her defender, cheeks blazing, face quivering with anger.

"I could have done for him! " she cried. "What hadst thou to do with it? Who made

thee my knight, meddler? Were I at the Temple I would have thee whipped."

"Oh, well, if ye wished the kiss so much, there's yet hope." Washington, the humble lover, was stung into making the very last remark he would have wished, had it given him an earldom.

She did not deign to answer, but completely annihilating him with a glance, she passed to George Mason.

"Art hurt?" she demanded of that youth, who seemed somewhat dazed. A murmur of disapproval ran through the company.

"What means this?" broke out Lord Fairfax. "Never did I see a more peevish way of awarding a champion. In my day George the Second would have had the kiss."

His opinion was voiced even more decidedly amongst the others. Esther wheeled on them hotly, and, undaunted by disapproval, was again disarmed by her well-meaning grandfather, who advanced to her side and said with emphasis:

"Nay, nay, Thomas; the child could have done as well by Mason as another. She has the muscle of the frontier, and the art to use it. She was not bred to your customs of drawing-rooms. Out there on the boundary a girl holds purity by strength ofttimes, and the struggling for it

makes it dearer. They are less willing to have it breathed upon." But this championship, and mention of home in one, did what no amount of scorn could have accomplished, and Esther hastily left the room with a trembling lip; it being evident to every one that the big fourposter above would shortly hold a very different Esther Denis than they had hitherto fancied.

"Thou art all a bunch of vile brutes!" cried Mistress Constance, catching the infection of feminine rage, and stamping her little high-heeled shoe with such violence that all the dogs set to barking at once. So much for the men; but turning on the women, she snapped with a decided I-thank-the-Lord-I-am-not-as-other-men expression, "You unsympathetic stones!" and she followed Esther, apparently for purposes of condolence.

Neither young girl reappeared until "children's hour," when all the inmates of the house, from grandfather to the youngest child awake, formed a crescent around the andirons and the blazing fire. As Esther and Constance entered, a controversy was taking place as to who should tell the first story. Something new was demanded on all sides. Constance could not forbear flouncing a little as she entered, quite as if all the previous excitement had been about her

alone. She rather looked down upon the Colonists, being English bred, and only on briefest of visits to Bellevue. Esther Denis took the chair a dozen hands pushed up for her, with the air of one not sensitive to her surroundings. The good-hearted Southerners each sought to show her some slight civility; truth to tell they had begun to understand the child, and a real affection was growing for her.

"Let Mistress Esther tell the first tale." This from Mrs. Mason, ever a gentlewoman.

Esther turned and looked at the speaker for a full moment, her big gray eyes black in the fire glow.

"I thank thee, Madam," she said simply. Then turning to the rest, "I will tell you a legend from the forest, of your far-away brothers, the Redmen, whom the settlers have driven to the border of the country God gave his Indian children."

"What!" cried Laurence Washington, forgetting himself.

"Tut, Laury, let the girl tell her own story," rebuked Lord Fairfax. "She has reason for what she says."

And Esther went on, her dreamy, gentle voice soft, as the voices of the South are wont

to be; her oval face full fair amongst the shadows.

"In the land of the Great Spirit," she began, "where breathes nothing that's evil, there grew flowers for each feeling, and each flower was tended by a maid who watched it, and when it was parched in summer her tears revived it, and it blossomed.

"Now the maiden most loved in the Spirit Land was a young and comely Delaware, and there came a young brave to her saying:

" 'Oh, beautiful and perfect maiden, be my Menemosha'; that is, sweetheart; for they do not wed there, ever—only sweethearts, and lovers always. But she answered him in scorn, saying:

" 'Begone, faint heart! Shangoda, I do not love thee, nor will I ever. I wish to wed a mortal—one with flesh and blood and warpaint, and a splash of some vices, just to make the virtues strong, and show brightly in the darkness.'

"The Kiwassa, the Gitche-manito, heard the maiden, thus chattering, and he came with wrath upon them, saying to her:

" 'Get thee to the earth of sadness, and wed a mortal; wed a chief, but take thy flower with thee.'

"So the maiden slipped to earth, in a dream cloud, and upon her breast a flower, and the name of the flower, Trust.

"In time she wed a great Sachem, or war chief, and rich was the wedding; but when parting with the others, one young brave said to her:

" 'May I touch that flower lying on thy bosom.'

" 'Aye,' she answered, 'for as it is blessed, so wilt thou become when thou hast touched it.'

"But her husband, the great warrior, turned upon her angered, tore from her breast the sacred flower, and trampled upon it.

"Then down from the far Land of Spirits came the maiden's other lover, and she knelt and asked him pardon for the scorn she had dared to breathe in heaven. And the lovers and the flower faded, faded with the sunset, red with love and blood and passion, and the Indians watched in silence; but the warrior covered up his head with his blanket and mourned for many moons together."

There was a general movement for the punch bowl when the candles were relit. William Fairfax raised his voice above the hum of the room to propose a toast.

"To the guests who are to leave us with the dew of the morning—Sir Denis and his granddaughter."

Cries arose on all sides, "No, no, not tomorrow!"

"Here's to their longer stay!"

"Why, they have but just come!"

When Esther and Constance were locked in their room for the night the former dragged the big grandfather's chair near the tall, mirror-crowned table,—far too high for convenience,—and standing on the arm she surveyed herself in the glass. She looked long and anxiously at the simple folds of her pale blue gown, held by a miniature brooch on each sloping shoulder, then turning she looked shyly at the dress of her companion. Her eyes rested on the bright red chintz and lighter plain quilt with a half-wondering, half-wistful gaze. Constance was standing before the fire, skirts held tight in either hand, to keep the fabric from the blaze, thereby displaying the slippered feet, high wooden heels, and gay stockings with huge clocks. On her neatly powdered little head perched a cap of lace and gauze, with a tiny leaf pattern, which was vastly becoming.

Suddenly Esther jumped off the chair, and going to the other girl asked a little bashfully:

"Tell me truth, Constance, is this—this dress of mine very silly to wear? The stuff, it came from across the seas. My grandfather sent for it when he married, and he gave it to me, for my grandmother died in a year, and never wore it. But I had no one to show me, I never had a mother," her eyes filled, "and—and—" But warm-hearted little Constance had thrown her arms about the speaker's neck.

"Dear silly thing!" she cried, "all the English girls would give all their gowns twice over to be, and look, like thee, and here thou art trying to ape them. Tell me the truth, too, dost not think these great stays, from neck to nothing, are ugly, clumsy, stupid things, awful to be in—and worse to get out of. Why, thou art like some olden picture of—of—Caesar, or something, while I" —here the speaker cast a furtive glance over her friend's shoulder at the mirror—"I, I am anything but pretty."

Oh, woe to her who had dared to tell Mistress Constance any such thing.

"Why, you are beautiful," said Esther earnestly.

"Oh, I'm so so," observed Constance, pulling a curl a shade nearer the front; and from the humble, self-denouncing air she became all at once quite patronizing.

"But answer me this, Esther Denis. What think you of George Washington, Esquire?" As she spoke she snatched up the counterpane, threw it about her, and bowed with her hand on her heart; then taking up the other side of the pantomine, sat down flat on the floor.

Behold the second change of the hour. Esther, the timid questioner, tossed her head in manner quite "Uppish," and replied with a sniff.

"By my faith, Shenden," retorted Constance, "never did I see such high handedness with the 'menzes,' as the darkies have it. Lud, girl, hast thou no wish for wedding?"

"Not where my heart does not lie."

"Well, God help thee when he goes to the wars! But why not George? He hath a goodly face, rides well, and carries his wine like a gentleman—never squeezing one's hand nor leaning up against one, like a bag of meal." By this time the questioner was flat on her back, with her feet irreverently placed on the clean white chair cover.

"As for that," replied Esther, climbing into bed, "Mr. Washington cares nothing for me."

At this Constance sat bolt upright with such suddenness that every curl fell to the front, shaking powder all over her small, tilted nose.

"Care! Who said he cared! Minx! thou

art a conceited baggage. But he loves thee, more the pity. Ouch! There is a pin boring straight through me, and as usual the head's come off, and I can feel it coming out at the back."

At seven next morning the door was unlocked by Esther, who ran back over the cold floor to nestle close to Constance, who kept up a steady squealing and chattering of teeth all the time, as if it were she who was running about in the cold. In came a small black figure, half hidden by a huge beaker of cracked ice, peach brandy, and mint, which must needs be tasted by all as an appetizer. But something else the little negro had, and with many grimaces she produced it.

"Miss Esser, I done got somethin' for yo. Mars Washin' done tole me to fotch it up heah, an' not 'low nobody to see it but you, yo'-se'f."

"Here, give it to me, rat!" exclaimed Mistress Constance, forgetting all about the cold, and springing out of bed for the paper.

"What are you waiting for? Scat!" she continued, throwing a slipper after the retreating message-bearer, who, retiring with more haste than wisdom, rolled, beaker and all, an entire flight of stairs.

"What did I tell thee! What did I tell thee!

A love poem, a real string of verse. It seems to run in thy family, Shen. Lord! I wish some gay gallant would pen me a few yards of this."

"What, allow me to inquire, is written in *my* note?" said Esther, preparing to kindle the fire.

"Stop doing that, and get in here till Tony comes, silly! Just listen to this. 'Tis elegant reading, sure, and from George Washington—the cold, the haughty! Oh, you and he are both alike, not one whit as you appear. Now hear this.

To My Lowland Beauty, Francise.
"From your bright sparkling eyes I was undone,
Rays you have—more transparent than ye Sun,
Midst its glory in ye rising day.
None can you equal in yr bright array,
Constant in your calm, unspotted mind—
Soe knowing, seldom one soe young you'll find."
—*From Washington's Diary.*

"Well," said Esther, smiling at her friend's pink toes, which stuck up in an animated row at the foot of the bed, "what says he of 'Love' in that? I am sure it's very like an epitaph."

"Why, here it is, 'From your bright sparkling eyes I was undone.' I have read that somewhere, I'm sure. He must have copied it."

"Well, I think it's vastly improper," said Esther, and vanished beneath the covers with a blush and a fit of giggles.

"Esther Denis! thou are hopeless! absolutely. I give thee up. If he heard thee say that he would never think thou hadst an 'unspotted mind' again. But if thou likest the rhyme so ill, give it thy obedient servant and I will take it home when I go, and tell the girls it was penned for me by some love-lorn provincial, who, when I would have none of him, shot himself with a horse-pistol."

"Nay, I'll copy it for thee, if thou wilt, but I wish the verse itself, to show the boys at the Temple."

"What! dost have men in the wilderness, Esther? And thou hast never told me, thou stingy minx. So this is why thou wilt have none of Sir George. Oh, Esther, tell me, is he a tall, dark man, with horse-pistols in his button-hole and his boots full of knives? Or is he some big Injun, who grunts like a swine, and goes about *sans* raiment. Thou canst talk about thy Indian brothers, but they're no kin of mine. Ugh! I'll wager my new stomacher they eat with their fingers just like dogs."

"*Sacre bleu!* Dost have dogs with fingers in England? What a funny place that must be."

After breakfast Lord Fairfax, who seemed to have taken a sudden liking to this unkissed

Western maiden, told Esther he had a present for her, and bade her follow him. They passed through the kitchen with its huge fireplace, half filled by a great pot on a crane, and thence out to a row of smaller buildings,—the schoolhouse, the office,—and passed these to the bake-, wash- and store-houses, until they reached the quarter. Hoards of moon-eyed little darkies, disreputable curs, fat pigs, and in fact everything with from two to four legs, gathered in their rear, until they possessed a train worthy of the three beggars in Mother Goose.

When every cat, kit and child was in attendance, Lord Fairfax suddenly turned toward them, and with a sweep of his arm said to Esther:

"Take thy choice. Which one of them wilt thou have?"

Esther glanced critically over the crowd of pickaninnies, and decided on a stocky little fellow of about seven.

"Lord, Missis, don' take my baby. He's de onliest one I'se got lef'; all died 'ceptin' him. Don' take him, Missis!" cried a mammy standing by.

"You need not fear for him," said Esther kindly. "He will have little to do and much to eat, and I shall bring him up to be a house ser-

vant. We have plenty of wild turkey and venison out there for the slaves. When I come East again you will be glad I took him. 'Tis better than selling him to some trader.

"Oh, Lordy, Lordy! Who say he gwine to be sole to a trader. Take him 'long, Missis; take him 'long! Yo' has de goodeses face I'se seen, an' I ain't got no 'jection to wile tu'key, an' veneshon. Heah! yo' limb of de Debbil, go get on a clean shu't, an' stop stan'in' dar like er frozen toad. De good Gawd only knows what I'll do 'outen dat boy, he are dat useful (hurry up dar, yo' good-for-nottin' rashcul) and dat nice an' 'bligin.' (Take off dat cap! Who done say yo' could take dat ere, yo' sneakin' pa'cel of debbilishness!)

Esther and my lord left the old negress and her refractory offspring, and sauntered toward the stables.

"Thou art a good judge of slaves, Mistress Esther. Ah! but when you come to horses, *there's* where an Englishman can give any woman pointers."

Esther's eyes lighted as they did under excitement, making their usual steady gaze the sweeter.

"There's little about a horse I should not have had reason to learn, my Lord," she said dryly.

As they entered the stable he paused.

"Mistress Esther," he began, "I'm a rough old soldier." Esther's sense of the original and poetic was completely outraged by this hackneyed preface, and she was absolutely relieved when at that moment young Washington stepped from a box-stall. For an instant George stood looking at her. Indeed, she was a rare thing to gaze upon, in a light fawn-color coat, with long loose sleeves; on her head, a pale blue Gainsborough, a parting gift of the devoted Constance, who had it over for a Colonial cousin. Reynolds would have gloried in a sketch of Mistress Denis that clear sunlit morning at Bellevue.

"Lord Fairfax, one of thy blooded geldings from home is off his feed this morning," announced George.

"The devil you say!" cried his Lordship, flaring up at once. "That comes of feeding this new corn by the bushel. I'll have no more of it!" and he strode off in search of the offending stableman.

"Good-morrow, Mistress Esther."

"Good-morning to thee, sir."

The two walked on toward the house; Esther taking keen delight in Washington's miserable silence and his evident effort to think of anything to break it.

" 'Tis a wondrous fine morning, Mistress Esther."

"As fine as a fleet filly," replied she, bursting with a desire to giggle.

Made still more uneasy, Washington held his peace until the house was in sight, then he essayed desperately:

"You don't know how much we, how much I—that is, you—" And he paused in agonized uncertainty.

This was too much for Mistress Denis. Her long-suppressed giggles burst forth, and remained unconcealed by her lace handkerchief, which was held up to screen them. Her whole face laughed, her eyes twinkled, and her cheeks seemed covered by the most elusive little dimples, which came and went in quite unexpected places.

Tears of diffidence and mortification came into Washington's eyes. He was very young and had never been in love before, and ridicule hurt worse than scorn or indifference.

"I did not mean it for a joke," he said.

Esther stopped in the beginning of a ripple and laid her hand on his arm as a boy might have done.

"I know thou didst not. 'Tis I am the silly one, not thee. I thank thee for the pretty verses, sir. They were marvelous well wrote, and as

like to Will Shakespeare's as one horseshoe to another. Thou will be a great man some day, Mr. Washington." This last placed him in an even more difficult position, although it set him all aglow with pride and dizziness.

"See!" cried Esther, "they are waving to us. I must go and make up my portmanteau."

"Oh," exclaimed Washington, " 'tis awful to think of thy going! Would that I too—" Then, the thought coming suddenly to him, "I *will* go some day. I will journey into the wilderness and see thee, if thou wilt let me."

"Nay, sir. A man's youth must be filled with other things save damsels. I know so many brave and brilliant fellows out there on the frontier who are wasting their talents on the border of the world. Thou hast a future to build, and hadst best set about it ere long. Come, let us go in."

Mistress Esther was perfectly aware that if anything would cause Washington to journey westward it was this remark; but her bearing was decidedly righteous as she led the way to the house.

Constance was waiting for them, all impatience. She was dressed in a bright red habit fitting like a glove, and having voluminous flowing skirts. She wore a black plumed hat, black

boots and gauntlets, and below her on the gravel walk was a restive little black riding-horse decked with a plush saddle, and held by a postilion as dark as the pony. In the distance the family coach could be seen dashing up from the stables.

"O Shen!" cried Conny, as soon as they were within hearing, "Sir William says I may ride with thee till we come to the end of the good roads, and then I am to drive back in the coach. Mr. Mason is going to ride, too, and"—this in a voice for Esther's ear alone—"the nicest man, who has just arrived,—another George, Mercer is his name,—and he says he is going to drive back in the coach with me. But hang him! he is all agog to meet thee, having ridden since dark this morning to see thy face ere the coach left. Young Washington has filled the man's head with thy fairness. One good beau begets another. Heigho! I never have any. O jemminy! there's the post."

Cries of "the mail! the mail!" came from all sides, and Sir William was soon surrounded by a jostling crowd of young people, eager to learn if this by no means frequent visitor had left aught for them.

"O Shen, Shen," gurgled Constance, dashing for the stairs. "Do come; he has not forgot-

ten; and look, a lock of his hair tied with a bow, and he says he is taming a Cardinal for me, and he is back at Oxford—"

"I thought you 'never had them,'" smiled Esther, putting Washington's verses in her jewel-case. But the only answer was a sharp rap of Mistress Connie's heels as she see-sawed ecstatically on the chair arm.

"I am crazy to see thee in man's dress, Shen. Lud! what an elegant man thou wouldst make, so tall and slim. One looks tall and slim out of petticoats," she announced defiantly, for Esther was laughing at the way little Connie stretched when saying "tall and slim."

"And I will kiss thee good-by, a long, long, long one—thou knowest, and it will be like Tom at home, this way." And she sprang on the chair, seizing Esther about the neck. The latter, however, flushed and drew hastily away.

"Don't, don't," she said, smiling a little nervously. "Thou makest me blush, Conny. Such things are not jest among us."

"Now the Devil!" cried the would-be lover, opening her eyes at least a half inch, then flouncing to the window. "What a dull country is this; here I am just *dying* to be kissed, and I can not even get a girl to do it, and Tom in England. O Shen, look! Here comes Mr. Mer-

cer, and he is perfect on horseback; he sits his mount elegant; and think what a long drive I'll have back with him. Madam Fairfax has made me swear I'll ride as lone as an almond in a shell; but I'm told they come double, often."

By this time they had reached the hall, which was crowded with every one in the house; even the big black cook had come to see the "Likely little Missis" off, and the colored "mammy" of the house was everywhere in evidence. One could not stir outside the door for dogs and servants, belonging both to the house itself and its many guests.

Esther's new slave and his mother were near the carriage, the latter weeping loudly over her departing son, who wore an expression at once comical and tragic; so desperate was his effort to appear less attracted by wild turkey and "veneshon," than corn pone and bacon.

In the midst of all was courtly old Sir William, shaking his guest by the hand, and urging him to take one more stirrup-cup ere he left them. Esther said good-bye to everything, from the smallest hound to that wonderful person of whom all, including even his master, stood in awe—the white-headed butler.

"Law bless yoah soul, honey, doan' yo' go do

dat now," cried the afflicted parent, hastily slipping the trinket Esther gave her into a large checked apron.

"Don't forget what I have told thee of the border," quoth Sir Denis, wringing my lord by the hand. "Forgive the saying it, Thomas, but it seems unreasonable that early affair of thy youth should prevent thee from settling down."

"Truth, James. I will see thee of it later. I have some broad acres that lie not above ten miles from thee, I judge, and mayhap I shall lay aside memories of old England and 'Midst these humble bowers lay me down.' "

At last Sir Denis, Mistress Esther, the small negro, a basket of lunch, and endless cloaks and boxes were stowed away in the coach. Mistress Connie and her gallant escort were mounted, and with a rush, a rumble, and a shout from friends, young and old, they were off for the West.

"Dey ain't no po' white trash! Dey's quality!" declared the children's black mammy when they had ceased to wave farewell.

# CHAPTER II

## 1748-9

*"She is marvelous young, and is wonderful fair."*
*—Miller.*

*"And brawny giants, men broad and bearded,*
*Did bless the earth as she walked upon it—*
*And called her more pure than their yellow gold treasure."*
*—Miller.*

What a different Esther Denis from the graceful, silent maiden she appeared in the East, was this gay, laughing, coquettish figure, who queened it over all around her, from morn till even, in the rambling old house, a hundred miles from civilization. Her drooping meekness had given place to a careless, free air, vastly alluring. She was herself again.

As Loyd Latimer strode into the kitchen, which he did every morning as regularly as the clock turned nine, he found the same conclave who had been there at that hour for upward of three years. Near the fire the colossal form of Aunt Lucy waddled and sputtered, never ceasing her undertone of vituperation as she stirred the pot and tended the flames. On the table sat the ubiquitous Jack Blackridge, poising on the end of a jeweled-hilted sword a hot biscuit, which he

had just purloined fresh from the pan. He looked a goodly figure enough, although somewhat out of place with his ruffles and scarlet-lined coat. In one corner sat Keneu—War Eagle—taciturn and bronze-like. He was cross-legged on a gay Indian blanket. His pipe, which was composed of a red clay bowl and a reed stem some three feet in length, rested on his knee. Near him, one leg on a chair, tuning his instrument was "Crazy Don," the singer, brave in a dark green hunting-shirt and leathern trousers. On one side of the hearth sat the rugged backwoodsman, Gist, his eyes fixed on the flame, in his hand a goodly cup of home brew. On the other side sat the stately great dane, Kratim,—as stoic and stolid as Keneu,—his great muscular shoulders and broad chest expressing the prime of vigorous doghood. On the back of a chair Reynold Blackridge was energetically engaged in trying to reach a jelly jar at the far end of the topmost shelf of the closet, and presenting in the act a strong resemblance to a mischievous school-boy, for all that he had a goodly calf, finely set off by a pair of deerskin puttees of home make; and his coat, being from England, sat well upon him. All over the floor lay, sat, yelped, fought and ate quantities of canines, most of them belonging

to every one but the owner of the house. Hounds, beagles, Scotch terriers in abundance, and "dogs of low degree." Little darkies stood or ran in every direction "toting" wood and provisions. And in the midst of it all, with her slim arms buried in a bowl of flour, and she herself enveloped in a far-reaching apron, stood the beloved center upon which the little world of the Temple pivoted. Her eyes were glistening, and her cheeks flushed with the labor; her hair fallen loose here and there, half hiding the tiny pink ear, or caressing the round of her cheek.

Here, for two hours each day, Mistress Esther held her court: baking biscuit unrivaled in the wide world; patting Sir Denis's ruffles; preserving fruits and distilling herbs for medicine.

When questioned by his people of these hours in the morning Keneu would answer scornfully, "Pale face heap like squaw; all work. Ugh!" But his white brothers enjoyed nothing so much as entering with Esther into all her life. It was fair enough too, for she did not hesitate to join with rigor in their pastimes. Mounted on Adjidaimo,—"Tail-in-air,"—her wild horse, she would follow the hardest hunt or maddest dash.

Each morning before breakfast the young

mistress of the Temple rode to every corner of the vast estate, waving her hat to the rows of workmen, white and black. The negroes looked upon her as quite beyond the human, even the indentured servants paying her an affectionate and reverential homage.

"Ye gods, here cometh the Guerilla!" shouted Jack, catching sight of Loyd, the speech somewhat impeded by biscuit.

"Hold thy peace, villain; thou art always prostituting jokes on my chaste brow," retorted Latimer.

"Thy language will bear mending, sirrah," returned the accused, nearly losing his balance in the dexterous purloining of another roll. "Is that seemly discourse for a maiden's ears? Out upon thee!"

"For the love of Heaven, Loyd, don't stand there chattering rot, but do something, man; do something!" cried Reynold, who felt vastly important since commissioned to shift the jelly glasses from one shelf to another.

"Blast thy hide, Ren! What hast thou done this morning?"

"I? Why, I am of the greatest value. I—" But a tragic calamity interrupted the valuable assistant; for a hound, making a rush at a scrap, ran hard against the legs of the chair, and

Master Reynolds; jelly and jar, fell flat on the floor.

" 'And down came baby, cradle, and all,' " sang Loyd.

But Esther flew to his assistance, and with bowl and water erased the jelly, broken glass, and blood which were indiscriminately mingled on his goodly outside.

"You should not eat jelly that way," said Loyd, who, being noted for tumbling over and in everything, from his own shadow to a pan of milk, was delighted. "Morning, Keneu; how's your squaw?" This being the only way to infuriate Kenue, it gave Latimer absolute joy. Keneu's having no squaw in the world, and scouting the idea so furiously, filled Loyd with much glee, from some unknown cause.

"Cleopatra, if you don't stop pulling Caesar's wool I'll whip Anthony!" This from Esther, who was again at the dough.

For the enlightenment of the uninitiated let us say this last was directed to three wool-tipped little pickaninnies who were the possessors of these high-sounding titles. For Esther named every beast, bug, and bullpup on the place: and having dipped into her grandfather's library with great address she held much reverence for Shakespeare. In this particular instance Caesar

was Cleopatra's brother, and Anthony, being of no kin, Cleo would rather have been beaten four shades blacker than have seen her beloved Anthony touched. These three possessed a pet sheep, which, like Mary's, followed them by day—and in this case slept with them at night. The irrepressible Loyd, by the way, penned a verse upon this same story of Mary, which began:

"Mary had a little calf;
'Twas fat, and white as snow,
And everywhere that Mary went
Her calf was sure to show.

There were several verses more in this touching little lyric, but in those days it was quite the fashion for young people to pen poems that would be far from delicate to the ears of those of the twentieth century.

To return to this quartette. The lamb was promptly called Shakespeare as soon as it evinced a liking for Caesar and Cleopatra.

Just then Anthony suddenly distinguished himself by inverting his manly shape in the rain barrel, his two bare feet waving madly in the air.

"Land, Miss Esther, jest leave him dar, an' when he come out he stay away from dose kine places," cried Mammy Lucy, who, much to her hourly trial, was Anthony's mother.

"Why, the boy'll *drown,* Mammy!" exclaimed Esther, dashing to the rescue; but Mammy Lucy was before her.

"Oh, my Lord! dat's so, dat's so! Oh, my baby!" ejaculated the hitherto scornful parent; and Anthony was hauled out, much the worse for water. Cleopatra set up a mournful howl, and Caesar doubled up with glee.

"How history repeats itself," said Esther, going in to look after Aunt Lucy's deserted tasks. Lucy's voice came faintly in from the hickory bush:

"Jes' stir de sauce a bit, honey, till I trash dis heah nigger." But no sooner had she finished than she turned on Caesar. "What yo' doin', laffin' at my boy, yo' little brak rat." And snatching up Caesar she spanked him even more vigorously.

When Roman and Egyptian had made common cause, and dashed off, joined by Shakespeare, with his spindle legs flying out on either side of his fat, puffy stomach as he fled in terrified pursuit, Mammy Lucy came bustling in.

"Never did see no setch chill'en! Get outen heah, yo' dogs! What yo' doin' in heah, Cromwell? Ef yo' doan' stop puttin' yo' han' in dat cake pan I'se gwine to kill yo'; 'fo' Gawd, I am!

Whar de quality gone?" For Esther, Loyd, Gist, Keneu, and all the rest had vanished.

"Art ready, sweetheart?" called Latimer up the rough, broad stairway of the Denis mansion.

"Yes, indeed." Esther stood on the second landing, a fair sight for the men below her. She wore a gay Indian hunting-shirt of deerskin, and a rifle slung across her shoulders by a bandolier; but her riding-breeches, boots, and gauntlets were of best English make, and her hair being done in solitaire—the fashion for men at that time—she looked not unlike a very up-to-date fop, ready for a jaunt.

Without, they found Keneu and Adjidaimo, the latter a steed of Esther's own catching and breaking. She was fond of thinking that he belonged to the breed instituted in the Southwest by the Spaniards of Mexico.

"For else how do you explain his Arab points?" she would demand.

Esther mounted, as did Keneu, without stirrups, and with a wild pounding of hoofs the whole party was off over the nearest fence through brush and briar, field and forest; happy, careless, reckless riders even Keneu, shouting with the others, for when among

friends, and bent on pleasure, none are so full of mirth and "ye jollity" as the Indians.

The merry huntsmen did not return from the chase until dusk. It was spring, and they rode more than they hunted, as a rule, but on this occasion Esther brought back a buck as her trophy, and Loyd outraged the party by bringing in a fawn scarce weaned.

Esther did not cease to dilate upon the cruelty of robbing the mother of its young, and the danger of exterminating the deer in their neighborhood by so doing, even when they were all seated at the tea table, where she presided, brave in a flowered chintz which Constance had sent from England and for which Latimer had ridden, in all, some two hundred miles to bring West.

"I never rightly understood the expression 'fawned upon' before, Mistress Shenandoah," remarked Loyd as she reopened the subject for the fourth time; "and as for 'robbing the mother of its infant,' when I challenged Jean Ardean last Michaelmas not one chirp did I hear from thee."

This caused shouts of laughter on all sides, for Jean Ardean was a Frenchman, cordially hated by all the "magic circle," and countenanced by Esther for what Sir Denis called "a counter-irritant."

The myrtle-berry candles lit up some handsome young faces round the board that night; and Esther felt a sudden tenderness for them stealing over her—comrades, lovers, brothers, companions, all in the most perfect accord, without being similar in the smallest way. Oh, it was a rare bohemia.

When Esther was quite little Sir Denis had had a harpsichord sent from England, and had taught her to play upon it. So when supper was over Esther and her court adjourned as usual to the drawing room—a long, low affair, rude bark-covered logs forming the walls, overgrown with vines, which made it seem like to some dream-land bower, for the floor was of earth. But what made the room most wonderful was the great quantity of crystal glass—a rarity then—used in rough French windows, reaching from rafter to floor. And it was these windows, thrown wide in summer and fast closed in winter, which let in the light and heat, making the flowers bloom so brightly. Now the moonlight fell through them, aslant the group around the little painted harpsichord.

Loyd with his flute, and "Crazy Don" with his instrument,—which Latimer pronounced a romance between a Spanish guitar and a gourd,

—accompanied her, and the others lent a lusty chorus.

Old Sir Denis in his arm-chair half closed his eyes with pleasure as the clear, strong voices drifted in to him, blended with the song of the maiden, whose tones, rich and vibrant, seemed to have stolen the sweetness from all the flowers about her.

# CHAPTER III

## 1748-9

*"Jul.—His little speaking shows his love but small.*
*Luc.—Fire that's closest kept burns most of all.*
*Jul.—They do not love that do not show their love.*
*Luc.—O, they love least, who let men know their love."*
*—Shakespeare.*

*"Ah, learn to love the rose, yet leave it on the stem."*
*—Meredith.*

"What dost thou think of it, Keneu?" Esther was balanced on a tree branch, and accompanied by her usual followers, who were all straining their eyes to the eastward.

"Pale face, pack horse," was the brief reply.

"I believe he's right, Shen," cried Loyd.

"Mayhap one of thy Eastern lovers, who has been frozen up all winter and is just thawing out now," said Ren; for Sir Denis had not failed to boast of Esther's conquests in the outer world; nor had Mistress Shen herself forgotten to drop Washington's verses where Loyd could not but see them, and of course read, shout, and sing them, and great was her shocked, righteous indignation when she heard that Loyd had made some verses on the first line, "From your bright sparkling eyes I was undone."

"Loyd Latimer," she cried, "thou ârt growing more evil tongued and wanton each day!"

A shout from Reynold, who was higher up in the tree, announced the mysterious object could at last be plainly espied; and as there were bets among them what it might be, eager voices from below demanded the report.

" 'Tis a goodly youth, nay a veritable Adonis; a combination of all that in man is beautiful. Aye, if I were a maiden I should die for love of such a one. For Heaven hath sure robbed a nation to endow him with the perfection of legions."

"Cease thy clack, Ren, and tell us what is it," called Jack.

"Damn thee, canst not take an honest man's word, spoken in simple truth?"

"Ren, thou are ever like a box lid stuck half open," complained Loyd. "Thou canst not be of use, nor yet shut up."

"Nor, at the peril of thy breeches, sat upon," retorted Reynold, warningly. Descending to the last limb, and revolving upon it, he alighted on the ground with such a "look what I did" expression that Loyd felt absolutely obliged to trip him up.

By this time the stranger was in full view, and Esther recognized Washington's straight young

form. Perhaps it was the flush that suffused her throat, and even covered her forehead, which made Loyd stop deviling Reynold and come to her side.

"Dost love him?" he whispered, to which Esther replied gravely and in earnest, "No." They told each other no falsehoods, these warm-hearted young bohemians, for there was but one woman amongst them. With two women is born intrigue.

As Washington rode up to the party the habit of blushing seemed contagious, for he was even redder than Esther. Reynold's description sat well on the newcomer. His eyes were a clear blue, and his mouth had not learned that set way of holding itself which it acquired in later years.

"Well, Loyd, what thinkest thou of my Eastern friend?" asked Esther when Washington had been named to each in turn.

"Very like a summer sunset," replied he; "pink, blue, red, and warm as the sun itself."

"Truce to thy jesting, Loyd!" cried Esther. "This is a friend and a traveler, not one of thy playmates."

"Ah, I forgot," said Loyd a little stiffly. Then turning to Washington, "Worthy sir," he said, "thou hast been introduced but poorly. As the Frenchman says, 'We look upon what a

woman does as we do upon a dog standing on his hind legs. We forget the way it's accomplished, for we are lost in wonder that she can do it at all.' Allow me then. Mr. Gist—who being but a passing visitor, and a married man, is not in love with any one. Reynold and Jack Blackridge—the devil helps the first and God help the last. Both in love with Mistress Esther. Here standeth our noble Indian brave, Keneu—War Eagle. Though we mingle not with others of his tribe, we need an eagle eye amongst us. Then, too, he is a silent fellow; and, 'being silent, tells no lies.' And here is 'Crazy Don,' who sings all day. And if I were a wanton youth—knowing what happened after I took my wine (which I never do)—I should doubtless hear him all night. Great is the sin of man. Lastly, gentle stranger, thine to command—not, Loyd Latimer. The fool of my lady's court, the mirth-maker, word-monger, and mixer. Look well upon me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven. 'Tis thy last chance to judge of them— What? wilt laugh at me for a fool? Remember what says Shakey Willy, 'O noble fool, O worthy fool, motley's the only wear.' "

But Esther stopped him with her hand on his shoulder.

"Nay, Mr. Washington, not our fool—our brightest and merriest of companions; who laughs but at his own trials, and lends a hand to every one else's; who never did a small action and holds the truest heart in all the Colonies."

"For God's sake, Shen, don't do that! Thou makest 'the great round tears to course one another down my innocent nose.' "

For all his jesting, something suspiciously like the great round article in question was in Loyd's eyes as he suddenly shook the girl off, with a newly acquired roughness, and hurried toward his horse.

"What the Devil ails thee, Loy; art drunk?" exclaimed Reynold, with no little irritation; for he was devoted to this comrade and rival, and liked but little to see him at a disadvantage.

"Nay, more sober than I've ever been in my life, man," Loyd answered, reining in his mount, and turning its head away from the road leading to the Temple. And there was a bitterness in the tone which none of them had ever heard.

When Esther realized he was really riding away, she ran after him, calling, "Loyd, Loyd Latimer, won't we see thee for supper?" Now Loyd had had every intention of returning as soon as this strange fit of, he knew not what, had passed; but at her words a wave of hot blood

seemed to rush from heel to head, and he replied quickly:

"I have an early start to make—ere dawn—and I must to rest betimes. Good-morrow," and he galloped off into the forest.

"Why, what does it all mean?" said Esther in the tone people use when they best know what a thing is.

"It means," replied Reynold, "that good old Loy is daffy on one subject, and acts so when he is reminded of his mania."

"And what is his mania?" as if she were totally unaware of his meaning.

"You," said Ren dryly. "Not that you did not know it perfectly well from the first; but you are just like all women, you want to hear it said over and over and dwelt upon, then said again," and he flipped a stick into the river.

At this somewhat strained point the day was saved by the arrival of George William Fairfax, who, when he had been introduced, rated George soundly for having outridden him.

"The boy has the oddest freaks," he complained. "He was busy all the way searching hill and dale for game, with his fieldglass. And no sooner did he see a group of men and horses than he set off at a frightful pace, the pack horse after

him, and my beast being lame I was near left behind for good.

"What beautiful sugar maples you have here," exclaimed Washington to Crazy Don as they mounted.

"Why, so they are, so they are," replied the other. "Now that you speak of it, I agree with you. I had never seen them else. We of the magic circle have eyes but for one thing."

"Now I must differ from you there," said Washington, smiling. "Were I to look long at the thing you speak of, I should lose my eyesight altogether."

They had fallen somewhat in the rear, and Don shifted restlessly in his saddle, fingering his ever-present instrument on its bandolier.

"I'll wager we'll have no singing to-night," he said dismally. "Shen will be all broken up. 'Tis the first time in five years—rain, drought, or blizzard—Loyd Latimer has been home and has not ridden over to supper at the Temple."

"Is—is—ere—" began Washington hesitatingly.

"Well, well, out with it, man. I'll forgive the word sooner than the wait."

"Is Mr. Latimer a lover of Mistress Denis's?"

Don regarded him with serious pity. "Why,

man, who is not? The squirrels bring nuts and put them in her mouth—all hulled; and the very does of the deer come running from their fawns and spray milk into her hat if she be thirsty. As for wild horses and buffaloes, they follow her in droves. Better ask me what is not her lover, and give me no labor." It was this somewhat picturesque form of speech which had gained Don his nickname.

"Well, then," persisted Washington," I had better ask, does Mistress Denis favor his suit?"

" 'Mistress Denis favors any suit, be it deerskin or broadcloth. Hoot, mon, she loves us all! There's not one of us whom she hath not doctored, in body and mind. She hath a dozen medicines of her own brewing, for cuts, bruises, and rheumatic pains, and a sound word for every slip i' the tongue. She hath out-ridden us, outtalked us, and—but my throat is dry with gabbing. She is a bonnie lass, and if ye mean, is she for marrying, she is not; for we've all given her the choice of our lovely selves for nigh two years. And they say Loyd asked her when she was still in long dresses if she would wed him when she got them on a second time. But, Devil take it, I have not sung since I left home this morning." And seemingly forgetting Washington's existence, he dropped the reins on

his horse's neck, and began to play in no poor manner, singing in a full bass:

"Who doth ambition shun,
And loves to live i' the Sun,
Seeking the food he eats,
And pleased with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy,
But winter and rough weather."

The evening passed rather quietly, for Latimer was a great addition to the mirth of a gathering; and Reynolds, who might have filled Loyd's place, felt unaccountably depressed. Sir Denis alone was as cheery as usual, welcoming George with open arms.

"Ah, my boy, I am glad to see thee as a maid her lover. Thou must tell me the latest news of Lord Fairfax. And how is Sir William? Gad zooks!" with a wink at the rest, "and what hath brought thee West, George?"

Washington said with no little confusion that Lord Fairfax had sent him to survey some lands in the Valley of the Shenandoah.

"And so thou hast come to survey Shenandoah, eh; well, well."

"Why, Sir Denis, I am at loss to interpret all this winking and turning of phrases," said Mr. Fairfax. "I should take it to be about some

damsel, were it not that I have never seen George look at one. To be sure, I have but lately returned to my father's; but I brought with me my wife's sister, Miss Carey, as fair a maid as ever tread a measure, and had thought to make a match; but this surly putt would have none of her. As for finding maids here, I have not seen so much as a squaw since I left civilization. Gad, what loveliness!"

The last was brought forth by sight of Mistress Esther, who, having made the usual transition from breeches to flounce, had done honor to the occasion by donning a lace and feather cap, placed on her high-piled hair; and as she stood in the doorway—smiling at what passed—she looked as queenly as her Eastern sisters could have asked. Nor did Mr. Fairfax recognize in this dainty maiden any likeness to the slender youth of that afternoon, until she informed him she had already seen him.

"Verily, Madam," he assured her with a bow, "thou art perfect, whatever thou art; but being a married man, I vow I know not which costume I find most alluring."

"May I make bold to inquire," said Mr. Fairfax, when they were seated around the heavy table, "why you call this the 'Temple'?"

"Because," replied his host slowly, with a

shade of sadness in his voice, "'tis mine, and here have I sacrificed my lost home in England, my youth, my golden ambitions, and my future that was to be." There was an awkward pause. "But," he continued, raising his head with a quick gesture, as though throwing aside some weight, "I am speaking for myself. I believe these gallants here call it the 'Temple' for a very different reason. Hey, boys?" and there was a response from all sides of—

> "Here's to Esser, God bless her, hurrah!
> Though we may not caress her to-day,
> We'll ne'er cease to press her, for aye!
> Here's to Esser!"

Which was the standing toast of the magic circle. But even this cast its shadow; for it was Loyd's big voice which usually bawled "Hurrah!" all out of tune, making it seem twice as hearty.

When the party broke up—two hours earlier than usual—Esther went out on the porch to bid them all good rest. Gist was bound for the Youghiogheny, and so bade them a warm good-by to last for a year at least.

"Good-night again, little girl," cried Ren on his way past from the stables, for no groom or slave could have brought Diavillo up alone.

"How far do the Blackridge boys ride?"

asked Washington when the last horseman was lost in the shadows.

Fairfax was engaged in discussing land questions with Sir Denis, over a glass of canary, and it seemed a time and place for wooing, out there on the vineclad porch, with its round whitewashed pillars, gleaming in the moonlight.

"Sixteen miles," replied Esther.

"And they come every day? Gad! when I was a boy I rode ten miles to school every morning. But ten miles to school is a long ways farther than sixteen miles to thee." He had drawn closer to her. "I have ridden twenty good miles a day for some time past, to see thee."

She made no answer. She was thinking how Loyd Latimer had ridden many times that distance, for the mere whim she had of wishing a dress cut the latest mode; and how he had merely laughed away her thanks.

"Art sorry I came to see thee after all? " asked Washington, her silence giving him courage. He leaned over her, and fancied he could even catch the perfume of an early rose half hidden in her kerchief. Esther started, and looked up at him. He was very good to look upon, with his eyes eagerly meeting hers, and his lips half parted in a quick breath; but it was

not her nature to love easily or yield to sudden admiration.

"Lud, Mr. Washington! I myself heard thee say thou was *sent*. Mayhap thy mother, Madam Washington, would have punished thee if thou hadst not come; and—" with infinite deviltry, "mayhaps she will yet, if she should hear of thy tarrying on the road." Then with a mocking little laugh—silver sweet—and the briefest of curtsies, she vanished through the doorway, leaving Washington bewildered.

"Mistress Esther," he called eagerly, stepping to the doorway; but his only answer was a rose, which crushed softly against his mouth and fell at his feet, giving him a delicious sense as if she had touched him.

Esther found Mammy Lucy busy about the bedchamber above.

"Lord, Honey!" exclaimed that worthy, "what yo' come in so soon foh? Dat nice lookin' ge'mon; an' moon a shinin' nice, an' birds a singin' in de trees—"

"Dear me, Mammy Lucy, what makes you hear birds this time of night? It must be spooks."

"Well, doan' know 'bout de birds, but de Lord knows de ge'mon air real, anyhow. Gra-

cious, honey, I done peek in de dinin'-room doah, an' he air dat pert, an' likely lookin,' an' done follow yer all dat way, an—"

"But, Mammy, he does not care for me. He had to come."

"Go on, honey, yo' jes' tole him dat; yo' know better."

"Aunt Lucy, thou hast been listening!"

"No, I warn't, Miss Esser; no I warn't! What mek y' think dat ere now. 'Fo' Gawd I ain't been lis'nin'. I jes' happen to be at de windah, kinder axerdental lak, I misremember how; but I never done heah nothin.' No lamb, never heah a word, an' I couldn't see nothin', nohow."

"Mammy Lucy, what art talking about? Thou hast brought me up to behave like 'quality'; what makes you talk about there being anything to *see?* I'm not a fur trader's daughter."

"Now de Lord keep yo' from anythin' lak dat air. Dey es de trashies' half-white trash ever got drunk. But yo' ain't done tole me whyfo' yo' 'jects to Mars Washin'ton yit. Yo' mus'n't 'speck him to try an' tell yo' nothin,' when yo' tell him he maw whip him ef he stay long; an' 'sides, dose menzes dat is alle's talkin' never mean nothin'. Now my firstes husbun'—

him dat was sold 'cause he had consumpting—he war a good man, never uses no word careless lak; but dat brack yallah nigger what come heah visitin' with some quality onct, he talk all time. Yo' 'member him, doan' yo'? Oh, yes yo' does, Anthony es jes' lak him. Look out foh dose talkin' menzes, de'll fool yo', de'll fool yo', jes' suah as yo's livin'." Esther thought of Loyd and said nothing. "What's de mattah, honey? Must be lovin' somebody. Come on to bed; let yo' Mammy tuck youse in; yoh's monst'ous contrary chile, aluz wuz. When yo' was little yer usen to stop right in middle of prayun' an' lie flat on de floah, an' holler an' yell—Lordy, but yo' could yell, an' kick! My, bless my soul! dar come Mars Washin'ton upstairs an' I ain't tu'n down he bed yet. Good night, honey; doan' forget to say yo' prayers."

Left alone, Esther went to bed, but not to sleep. She had an uneasy feeling of change. Latimer's empty chair at table had given her a sense of something lost, and she was troubled by his remark that he was making "an early start." Loyd had no such idea that morning, for it was his nature to turn himself wrong side out and proclaim his most personal concerns to all men. Then his sudden resolution must have been caused by the arrival of Washington. The

importance which her various friends and admirers attached to George raised him immensely in her eyes. There is a species of mental suggestion—or more properly hypnotism—unconsciously exercised in numerous cases upon young damsels, which consists in the saying, "Do you love him? Must you? Can you?" and most potent of all, "Do not love him," until there's no help but to "love him" with all their might.

Suddenly Esther heard a faint noise on the ground outside the window. Most people would have decided it was the wind, a twig falling, or some small matter of the nature world, but Esther detected in a few moments that two things were pacing back and forth without. Springing up, she saw through the casement, as she had guessed, a man and a dog, walking slowly to and fro beneath her—Loyd Latimer, with Kratram at his heels. The grave solicitude and profound concern on the dog's face, distinguishable even in the moonlight. The look of tragedy into which Loyd Latimer had forced his unwilling countenance produced a most comical effect; for some faces are carved to wear a habitually sunny aspect, and a serious, depressed expression on the irregular, flexible features of Loyd Latimer's visage was about as compatible as a cardinal at a candy pulling.

All at once Loyd turned upon his follower, with all the pent-up wrath of the past five hours.

"Go way, thou damned dog!" he all but shouted. "Why dost dog me, brute?"

This appeared to Esther—as it really was—monstrously funny; and the sound she involuntarily let slip made Loyd give such a jump that she gave up entirely, and sat down on the sill to laugh in good earnest.

"Now by my faith, Shen, I shall be much thy debtor if thou wilt let me into the jest."

"Thou art there already; thou art it, Loy; and now, wilt tell me what ails thee?"

" 'Thou art it,' " returned her jocular lover.

"I thought," said Esther, in the coldest of tones, "thou hadst to be 'to rest betimes.' " Loyd turned without a word and walked away. Esther went back to bed, but the thought of dear old Loyd, pacing about alone, was too much for her. She got up and stole back to the window. Loyd was fumbling with his horse's tether, which was evidently in a hard knot. As she stood looking at him she thought of all the artless little things he had done for her, almost every day of her life. He had never denied her slightest whim, were it ever so absurd or idle; and how little had he ever asked of her, a lock

of hair, a glove, and only one thing else,—which she had never given him,—a kiss.

"Loy," she called in a very faint voice.

"Well." His tone was indifferent, but she knew he felt thoroughly miserable for all that.

"Loy, if I give thee just *one,* wilt thou go home and to sleep, and behave thyself?"

Loy was at the window—nay, up on the sill—so suddenly that she could scarce believe it was not some one who had sprung up from her feet; but there he paused.

"Esther," he said very soberly—the fact that he called her by her own name was serious in itself—"hast ever before?"

The question may seem foolish to a modern ear; but Loyd Latimer knew that if Esther had kissed she had loved; for she was not one to do things by halves.

"No, Loy, never," she whispered, looking not above ten summers.

"Dost love me, Shen?"

"Only as I love the rest, Loy," she answered softly. How she wished that she could say yes; but she knew that did she ever make such an admission—let her deny it the following moment—Loy would have her on his horse and married at the nearest opportunity—priest or parson, as it chanced.

He reached in and lifted her beside him. How frightened would have been most maidens, lest some one should see them in so novel a position, but who cares in bohemia? He gazed down at her with a long, hungry look; she shivering a little, from a kind of fear. She had never felt him so strong before, and he was trembling. Then without a word he slipped from the sill and ran to his horse. The moon was just setting, but she could see him cut the hitching strap and gallop off as if he feared to be called back.

Never did unkissed maiden feel more chagrined. Her pride was severely wounded, and in the darkness she sobbed to her pillow, "Well, if he doesn't want one, I know others that do."

# CHAPTER V

## 1748-9

*"And the daughter of Nokomas*
*Grew up like the Prairie lilies,*
*Grew a tall and stately maiden*
*With the beauty of the starlight;*
*And Nokomas warned her often,—*
*Oh, beware of Mudjekemis—*
*The West Wind Mudjekemis.*
*Listen not to what he tells you,*
*Lie not down upon the meadow.*
*Stoop not down amongst the lilies*
*Lest the west wind come and harm you."*
—*Longfellow.*

*"When he sang the village listened;*
*All the warriors gathered around him,*
*All the women came to hear him,*
*Now he moved their souls to passion,*
*Now he melted them to pity"*
—*Ibid.*

*"Whatever skeptic could inquire for,*
*For every why he had a where for."*
—*Butler.*

After breakfast next morning Sir Denis suggested Esther should take their guests to the nearest Indian camp.

"They may be interested in a little scalping, or something like that. Odds bodkins! I once was taken prisoner by the fiends myself. One of their chaste pastimes while I was there was hanging dogs by hind heels to sticks over a fire; while the poor beasts wriggled and twisted in agony, the Indians danced about with ecstasy. I once saw three warriors of a rival tribe burned

in that manner. But I'll vow the poor brutes of dogs gave me more discomfort of the two. The braves died singing. When I managed to smuggle a note through to a settler asking for relief, I wrote only where I was, and quoting old Shakespeare to the end—'Hell is empty,' wrote I, 'and all the devils are here.' " Then a sudden memory seemed to drive his hearers out of his mind, and he sat quite still.

Sir Denis had ideas concerning the expedition, which he kept to himself. Truth to tell, the old gentleman highly approved of George, and would have been glad to have him on the estate, managing the affairs, and—harder still—Esther, a thing which Sir Denis had never accomplished. To be sure, Esther was but fourteen; but that was a perfectly legitimate age for a girl to wed, in the golden days of the Old Dominion. Princess Merat—a Virginia girl—was twice married and a mother before fifteen. The young men were counted marriageable at nineteen, and although Washington was three years lacking that age he had the appearance, good sense, and deportment of twenty years.

They set out about ten, accompanied by Crazy Don and Keneu, arriving at the camp near noon. They were met by a young brave some little distance from the camp itself. He was evidently

one of the outlying scouts stationed about an Indian gathering to ward off surprise. He recognized Esther at once, and with friendly expressions offered to conduct them to the sachem, or ruling chief. Their escort was a fine young animal, dressed much as God had made him, save for his paint, and a blanket about his loins. His horse was a beautiful brute, and as it bore the marks of a saddle Washington asked Esther if the savages used such civilized things.

"No, indeed," laughed she, "that is one of mine he stole last fall. The Indians are very proud of their stolen horses; and for my part, after they have risked their lives to get their mounts, I am disposed to admire the feat and forgive the fault." Turning to the young brave she made some bantering remark in his own tongue. He laughed with evident pleasure, and replied, "Mine now," making his steed curvet as he spoke. The horse's present trappings were most picturesque. There was a bridle which was an object of wonder to the Easterners, having a long rein which dragged quite on the ground; then there was a broad collar, with a great tuft of horse's hair fastened to the front, this decoration being dyed a beautiful red.

"You notice," said Esther, waving her hand toward the animal, "that the Indian horses wear

tails before and behind, so that no one can ever say they turned tail and ran."

Upon entering the wigwam of the chief—Shagriss—Esther introduced them all with great ceremony; upon which they and the chief sat down on some broad skins and watched in silence while one of the squaws of this important personage mixed maize, or Indian corn, and roasted venison for them. The Indians never allow a guest to enter their tent without having food prepared for him, and on no account will they allow even the veriest stranger to pay a sou in return.

When they had finished Esther gravely presented the monarch with a bottle of rum and a bag of coffee, both of which are much coveted by the Indians. Then speaking for the first time in the past hour, she asked:

"How journeys Nunanawbiegs, thy great jossakeed, and wabenus? My red brother Keneu hath told me of her illness, and my heart hath grieved."

"Great is her sorrow," answered the sachem. "In the night she dreams strange dreams, and in the day she sees strange visions, and her mind is troubled."

"I shall go to my sister, and tell her of my pity," answered Esther.

"Dost not wonder at the politeness and formality of these savages?" she said as they left Shagriss, and Shaw Shaw—their former guide—and went toward the outskirts of the camp. "This old woman is a character. She is a jossakeed, and wabenus; that is, prophet and magician. She has always been fond of me, for when I was small I believed in her implicitly; and we all so love to be believed in. My first visit to these people was novel, to say the least. There was an Indian uprising along the frontier. I was fond of rambling about the woods, and pretending I was Ophelia—my grandfather early filled my brain with Shakespeare. One of the young braves came upon me, and thinking me a great prize, bore me off to his wigwam. I was carried through a crowd of women and children, who threw numbers of small missiles at me. By a lucky chance one of the women wished my shirt, and she grabbed it off without more ado. I was small at the time, but my embarrassment was awful; quite overpowering my fear. Well, it saved my life; for when the sachem saw me he cried out, and took me from the brave, pointing to a small birthmark over my heart, which was a little red star. I had always had a childish awe of this myself, but I can not imagine why it should make me such a

famous person among them. I dare say that it is one of their superstitions. Any way, the sachem bade them treat me as a brother always. I believe I am as modest as any, but verily were I to be so placed again I should cast away the covering of that tiny mark. You see why they call me Shenandoah, daughter of the stars."

As they entered this new dwelling they were confronted by a blear-eyed old crone, whose brown skin, drawn loosely over her high cheek bones, was as parched and dry looking as a cured hide. Her long white hair, coarse in the extreme, hung tangled and matted about her scrawny shoulders, and gave her an indescribably wild and savage appearance. She seized Esther in her bony arms, crying piteously, like an animal in pain.

"Shenandoah, Shenandoah!" she moaned, "I have dreamed of ye. Take care, O my pale-faced sister, there are tears, tears, and miserable weeping for ye, and sorrow, black darkness. Heap pain, heap crying of your people!" Suddenly her eyes dilated, and her mouth worked convulsively, her gaze riveted on Washington. "Go away, pale face; sachem of the English, leave Shenandoah!"

Washington was embarrassed as well as appalled by the horrible contortions her visage un-

derwent, and the rage and intense hatred in her inflamed eyes; but Esther, who was more accustomed to these emotional people, interrupted her.

"Cease, Spirits of the Water; this is not a pale face sachem, he is my friend and brother."

"Who tell Nunanawbiegs! I know I have seen him in the forest, in the ice-river, and again up in the forest. O pale-face sister, promise thou wilt leave him. He will bring you tears and weeping. Promise—" and the old woman flung herself at Esther's feet, and fell to hugging the girl's knees, with a pleading expression at once repulsive and pathetic.

"I never desert my friends, red sister," answered Esther gravely. Suddenly the hag sprang up, resorting to her own language in her wrath.

"Esa! esa!" she shouted, and pushed Esther from her lodging; then retreating to the farther end, she covered her white hair with her blanket, and remained motionless, her head between her knees.

"She is a strange creature," said Esther when they were out of hearing; "she has grown to be a very respected prophet, and absolutely believed in. Her principle is to always prophesy evil and then pray to turn away the impending

sorrow; as misfortune is generally in the predominance, she is often correct; but if the best occurs, great is her triumph, for she has averted the doom, and they bring her presents. She has a sad enough story herself, Heaven knows. She married a white settler, and I have no doubt, as she owns some white blood, her children were pale faces—so at least they started. There was war at the time, to the death, between settlers and the Indians. She had a little cottage with the man whom she worshiped, and was, I suppose, in Indian heaven; but one night her husband did not return. She went to search for him, and found his horse grazing near by. Mounting, she rode some miles, and saw the remains of a camp-fire, a post, and other signs that to her eyes told the tale. She returned, and found her children nailed to the ground by stakes driven through them, and they writhing in their last agony. She watched them till dawn, and 'twas in that night her hair turned white; and from a slender Indian maiden she became a thing for pity and disgust."

They walked on for a time in silence.

"I do not wonder she sees visions, and predicts woe to all men. She has been in a hard school," said Washington. "But where have all the others gone?"

In truth, the village seemed deserted.

"Why," explained Shenandoah, "when we came in I saw some Indians busy about a horse. They often kill one and drink the poor brute's blood to give them courage in the foray. They have all set off for a raid on some hostile tribe, no doubt; and the women have followed them a ways to say, 'Fight and die singing.' It is spring, and as says Chaucer, 'The spring fret' is on them."

In a few moments they saw coming back to their dwellings those who had not accompanied the party. The expedition had not been so exciting as Shenandoah had supposed. The Indians having a maxim of "A life for a life," and having lately lost a young brave, slain by a hostile tribe, they were merely off to kill a few in return, which Esther remarked was fair enough, and quite reasonable. She now set about persuading the remaining Indians to perform a war-dance that evening, seconding her request with "presents." The squaws at once began arranging for the occasion. The ground had to be cleared and smoothed for a large round space, and a huge pile of faggots placed in the center.

"Shaw Shaw," whispered Esther to Washington, "has made a musical instrument of a gourd

and some shot, with one of his horse's tails for decoration—the red one, too," she added.

The war-dance was quite new to Washington, who had never before come face to face with these strange people—an anomalous mixture of diplomats, beasts, and children. He was strangely excited and stirred by their weird cries. The primeval man was all awake in him that night, in the glow of the fires, and the still, heavy air—so warm for spring—fraught with mist and perfume and voices of the night. As the warriors dropped down one by one near the fire they began a low, regular chant, not beautiful, nor even pleasant, but strangely dulling. The keener senses of the mind, the intellectual side, seemed deadened by the monotonous recurrence of the verses. They sang in the language of the Delawares—of victories, battle and death.

Suddenly in their midst rose the voice of Crazy Don, the singer. It was not the voice he used each day in singing, but it was as he sang when he told of the battle of Culloden; where Charles Edward—his king, his sovereign, his royal prince—had been defeated, and all night long the shrieks of the wounded had rung in the singer's brain, were ringing there still, nay, in his voice they sounded and echoed; and the death cry of England's veterans came to the

ears of the savage and provincial with a wild, discordant note. Washington rose hurriedly and left the circle; Esther saw him go and followed.

The boy had been drawn out of himself by the savage scene and the weird song of battle, mingled with the vastness of the wilderness. He stood alone, not knowing where he was, nor realizing he did not. The moon rose red, and the stars were blurred. He felt Esther's hand in his. The power of the spring and the voice of all nature seemed drawing them together, but neither moved.

Far down in the hollow a wolf howled, and its mate answered, short and sharp, as it leaped through the half-light. Washington turned toward the girl.

"Keneu," Esther's voice was unwontedly sharp as she demanded, "is it noble to spy on friends, or dost wish to watch the moon rise?"

"Young pale-face start off, singing raise he blood, same as young Indian just made warrior. I follow, to keep him from arrows. Heap strange Injun round."

The darkness hid Esther's troubled look as she listened to this long speech—the longest Keneu had ever made in his life.

Next morning Washington was awakened by

a hand on his mouth; and he heard Esther whisper:

"Don't talk, but come as quietly as thou canst."

They had walked about a mile before it was light; and Esther sat down to rest.

"I thought it best for us to walk back," she said a little awkwardly. "These Indians are surrounded by spies, who think, for some reason, that thou are a mighty personage. However it may be, I received a warning from one of the squaws last night; and as I know a short cut, at dawn I called thee. Mr. Fairfax will bring the horses."

"If there is danger, thou must leave me instantly!" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Washington, thou hast forgotten what a sacred person I am among these red men. The world of Bellevue may think me a little thing, but here I am *tout la chose.*"

Esther had brought some jerked meat and maize, but she insisted upon waiting till nearly noon before eating it.

"Thou wilt have to walk a goodly ways, Master George, ere thou can stomach this," she laughed. "And besides, there's not enough for breakfast and dinner both."

"How didst know it was dawn?" he asked, looking at her with infinite admiration.

"By the cry of an owl," she replied, vastly proud of the knowledge. " 'Tis a pity we could not have tarried a few moments longer. Thou wouldst have heard the Indians moaning for their dead in the burying field near by. They are fine weepers, these people, and quite pride themselves on it. The harder a man blubbers for a dead friend, the more scalps and squaws he has; and the more horses he steals, the greater the chief."

Shut away alone in the wilderness, most young people would have fallen in the way of making love on that glorious clear morning; but the spell of the night being broken, Washington, like all passionate natures, was ashamed of his past strong emotions. In after years, however, he looked back on this sunlit walk through the woods as one of the happiest memories of his boyhood.

Esther was full of buoyancy; running here and there to pluck the forest flowers, sitting down to weave them into wreaths, with the absolute simplicity of a child in her manner; telling him the while the French, Indian, and English names for bird, beast, and tree.

She seemed to drive naked little love away—

shame-faced—and called forth well-dressed, practical goodfellowship in his place. She had that power which a good actress always possesses of being able to assume a part, irrespective of her dress. That morning she chose to be the damsel, and breeches and boots might have been soft muslin and slippers, for all that Washington knew.

"Behold," she said, unfolding a neat case of dyed deer-skin, inside of which there lay a long shining feather, which had evidently been smoothed and polished, for it glistened in the sun, and showed innumerable bright colors on its dark surface.

"Now be good, and I will tell thee all about it," she continued, replacing it in her hunting shirt. "That is the famous feather which preserved the life of a noble Delaware chieftain while hunting buffalo in the land of the Pawnees, where he had no rights whatever, to my thinking. The Indians believe the eagle a great bird—very much as we do George III; his eye flashes lightning, and his wings make thunder. So this warrior, being hard pressed,—really in a tight place,—cooped up on a high mount with Pawnees thick as ants all about him, sacrificed a horse to this austere deity—the eagle, not George III. No sooner had this noble act been

accomplished than the bird himself appeared in the heavens; quite a magnanimous condescension for the feathered father, I assure thee; for he argues with Henry IV, 'By being seldom seen I could not stir—but like a comet I was wondered at' and is never 'commonly hackneyed in the eyes of men'; but in this case he let fall a wing feather. The chief took the sacred token, bound it to his forehead, and fought his way free, dealing slaughter out by the handfuls, without being harmed, nor one of his followers touched. Oh, 'tis a mighty weapon this. And last night no less a person than Shagriss himself brought it to me. He declared he felt absolute faith in what Nunanawbeigs had foretold, and begged me to take this sacred feather to ward off sorrow and trouble. He also bade me to 'die singing'; which was somewhat inconsistent I considered, but it bespoke good faith; crafty Indians are always exact. He then informed me that the coffee—which was very good—and the rum—which was better—were both drunk up. I suppose that was not a hint, was it? I can not see why I should be the proud possessor of this prize, as the great Eagle watches over Delawares, not pale-faces; but it would have cut Shagriss to the quick to have it refused. To tell truth, I like having it myself—not that I am

superstitious,"—blushing,—"but it is a curiosity—if the real one at all. It may be a wild turkey feather furbished up for the occasion. Speaking of this great Eagle God, the thunder being his voice,—wing flaps or whatever it is,—they stand in great awe of the thunderbolt. I should not care to be hit by one myself. Arrows tipped with the iron of a fallen meteor are considered sacred and sure to deal death and destruction. Keneu has several. He gave me one of them once. I seem to have 'blessings thrust upon me' constantly. The embarrassing feature of these, however, is that if a thunderstorm arises just as one is dealing 'death and destruction' with a thundering arrow one is borne away by the lightning. I am of the opinion that the 'Happy Hunting Grounds' must be a fine place, positively thick with sacred arrows and Pawnees, longing to be tortured, for those who are carried off in this wise never revisit the scenes of their youth."

As they turned into the main road leading to the Temple they were confronted by a most remarkable figure, who might have stepped into a frame and presented an excellent portrait of an old beau of about seventeen hundred. His wig was powdered, and his shoe buckles shone with wonderful brilliancy. His coat, too, which stuck

out straight from the waist on either side, was so immaculate that a speck thereon would have died for loneliness. His hands were very white indeed, nearly covered with lace ruffles, and around one of his slim fingers he revolved with consummate dexterity a shining ebony cane surmounted by a grotesquely carved ivory head. As he advanced to meet them his eyes twinkled with the most apparent delight, and he stepped along with a tread quite incompatible with his evident years. He bowed over Esther's hand, kissing it with courtly veneration, and adjusting an old-fashioned monocle he turned toward Washington with an air of the utmost courtesy.

"This is Mr. Washington, Professor," said Esther, taking the old man's arm, and they all three walked on together. A pretty trio, they might have posed for a group representing the Old World, the vigorous colonies, and their Western brothers; who were to take up the work of conquest and civilization when they were forced to lay it down for other duties.

As Washington sauntered on he could not help liking this eccentric old gentleman more and more.

The Professor's first remark was the one he invariably made to every stranger. Twirling his

cane with great address, he said in a tone which he thought to be absolutely off-hand:

"Useful cane, that."

"Very handsome, I should say," replied Washington kindly; "but one of thy firm steps does not put it to much use, I imagine." This delighted the old fellow immensely.

"True, true; but, odd thing about that cane! One day when I was walking with his Grace the Duke of York we met his Majesty. His Majesty and I always got on famously, and he stopped to chat. Said he, 'That's a fine cane.'

" 'If your Majesty will but accept it!' I cried.

" 'Well,' quoth he, 'that dependeth upon where thou hast obtained it. Now if a lady gave it thee—'

" 'Nay, nay!' I made bold to put in, 'she would feel greatly honored.' But upon that he would have none of it, exclaiming that a woman would never forgive such a breach of faith.

" 'Nay,' quoth he, 'if the Lord in heaven asked thee, they would rather see thee damned first,' and he went away laughing. Verily, I believe he was right. She was a proud minx, egad," and he produced from his pocket a case which opened to the touch, displaying a sweet coquettish face of evident good breeding. No

gems were visible save a betrothal ring on the slim hand which held the kerchief.

"My wife," he announced with pride pretty to watch.

"She is indeed angelic," said Washington, and truthfully, for the lines of the mouth were tremulously trustful, and even the arch sparkle of the eye held no suggestion of worldliness.

"She's dead," said the old Professor, smiling with the expression a child might wear when telling of some occurrence it knew would excite older listeners, but which held no personal reference.

The pathos of this insensibility to a blow which had undoubtedly deranged his mind was not lost. Esther turned away her head and Washington hastened to change the subject.

"From thy title I presume thee to be a man of letters, sir," he ventured.

The Professor fairly strutted with artless pride and delight.

"That is correct, sir; correct. I am the historian of this new world, sir; when my book is completed the King himself will read it, Pall Mall and Temple Bar shall ring with my name, sir. Odd's life, my work shall be noted in the gazette, and Tony—my friend Tony—will jump when he hears I have given my book to

another publisher. Pest! Of course I'll not give it to him. He would not take my first poem, for all he used to black my father's boots; so I took it around to a little fellow whom nobody knew, and the piece made a hit. Well, well, he will regret it twice over now."

As he told of these prospective triumphs his eyes sparkled and he bore himself as any general coming home from the wars, hailed by an adoring populace—and yet this was 1748, he would never see his dear England again, and his friend Tony had passed beyond regrets.

When they reached the house they found Mr. Fairfax waiting for them. The Professor took a sudden fancy to him, and as soon as he could engross the other's attention he exclaimed:

"Odd thing about that cane, Mr. Fairfax," and then followed the story so dear to his heart. He had a habit of cocking one eyebrow, which was by nature higher than its mate, which tallied well with his general sprightliness. His devotion for Esther was almost pathetic, for it was plain to be seen she reminded him vaguely of that other young maiden whose hand he had once kissed much more warmly, when he too was young and of good feature.

After supper it turned cold, quite without warning, as it is wont to do in that climate dur-

ing the early spring. The windows in the drawing-room were closed, and the enormous fireplace was heaped with stumps, which being of pine caught the blaze in every separate splinter, until they made an awe-inspiring sheet of flame some four feet high.

The Blackridge boys arrived later than usual, and about nine Kratrim ran out as though greeting a friend. Esther started up with a flush and unwonted hurry, but her manner was positively chilly when there was a lively "Hello!" and in strode George Croghan; tradesman, frontiersman, and all-round good fellow. He was on his way to catch up with his friend Gist, and only took a warm glass with a bite of food. As Esther saw him off outside, giving him the last direction as to the road Gist had planned to go, she fancied she saw some one moving against the trees. She thought it might be Loyd, but instead of murmuring "The greatest of these is charity," and going to bid him enter, she hurried inside and slammed the door with unnecessary vigor.

When she joined the others she found the Professor making his farewell. He had some "writing to do," he said, and the way he mouthed the delicious words showed how good to him they tasted.

"But, Professor," expostulated Esther, "this will never do. Thy coat is not fit for this cold. The weather is not what it was this noon. That is always the way with genius, you are ever on the mind, never on the body." Meanwhile, Washington, who was much attached to his new friend, brought out his own riding-cloak from the hall and persisted upon putting it on the protesting old gentleman, who nevertheless snuggled down in its folds with great satisfaction.

"A fine coat, Mr. Washington. I should say it would become thee mightily."

"Quite so," said Sir Denis. "When the boy came he had it on and he looked every inch a king."

Esther and George saw the Professor start in the semi-brightness, for though the moon was not up the stars were luminous. As he walked lightly away, wrapped to the chin in the big cloak, Esther noticed that Kratrim was following.

"A dear old man," said Shenandoah. "He has taught me much, for never a question but he has an answer. I would that I knew his real name. My grandfather is the only one of us who knows it and he will not give even a hint. They used to be chums at Oxford and lived near together. I imagine there was some vio-

lent estrangement, which was patched up on account of the Professor's great sorrow. Neither is of vindictive character. Go in first, Mr. Washington, and I will call Kratrim back; he is apt to stray off after guests."

George thought the request a strange one, but ever courteous to the will of women, he went in alone.

In a few moments Esther came running back and called Reynold into the hall.

'Ren," she said, "the Professor has been shot."

They dashed back to the old fellow, and together carried him upstairs. Esther looked where the arrow had entered and then put her arms about him.

"No, no, Ren; there is no use in brandy, he is spent. As she spoke the Professor opened his eyes.

"The picture," he faltered. "Tell James, tell James to take it and my book; thou wilt have it bound; 'twill never be finished; thou wilt find it in—

"Aye, aye, I know, I will have it done."

His eyes opened suddenly and fairly snapped. "Let not Tony have it. Say him nay, though he beg it of ye."

This was not so hard to bear, but when he

added weakly, "I think—I think I should like to have my cane laid with me," Esther and Ren both found it hard to keep their sorrow from showing. The Professor, however, was beyond the sight of tears.

"Go get his cane, Ren," said Esther, rising, with a trembly sigh, but an energy about her. As soon as Ren had gone she raised her old friend, drew the arrow, and laying the cover over him, hurried to her own room. Taking an arrow from the mantel shelf she compared it with the one she held. Quickly changing her dress to riding costume she ran downstairs, and met Reynold in the hall.

Go tell Cumberland to saddle Mr. Washington's horse, Mr. Fairfax's, and mine," she said, and passed into the drawing-room.

Mr. Fairfax, some Indians have heard Mr. Washington is the great sachem of the English. They are friends of the French, and are determined to have his scalp to-night. Both of you will have to leave here at once. I shall guide you as far as the trail taken by Croghan, and you can soon overtake him with your fresh mounts."

As Esther swung into her saddle she whispered to Ren:

"Spread the alarm as soon as we are out of hearing, and break it gently to Da-da."

When Shenandoah finally drew rein she turned to Washington.

"Thou wilt come again when thou art near here? I shall convince these Indians that thou art quite an ordinary man."

"I shall come again," whispered George, "if all the Indians of the frontier are waiting for me."

When Esther left them she did not go toward the Temple, but rode quite another way, turning from right to left as the case demanded, lighted only by a mist-covered moon. Finally she dismounted, and turning Adjidaimo loose to graze, she walked on some little distance. Entering a wigwam she stood face to face with Keneu. He sat by the fire, his arms folded, his expression unmoved even by her sudden entrance. She stood regarding him a few moments.

"Keneu," she said at last, speaking in his own tongue, "thou hast done a foul and dreadful thing. Thou art lower than the dogs. Esa, Esa, shame upon thee! Nor hast thou killed him whom ye sought. He rides free, back to the land of his brothers. Keneu, thou knowest I can never be thy squaw. Thou hast seen me

with pale faces. Thou knowest some day I will wed one. Is it love, or is it wisdom, to kill my sweetheart, if I have one. Thou knowest the Indian law, Keneu—a life for a life. This arrow should twice slay to-night. Miserable hound!" she exclaimed as she thought of her old friend lying covered and still, "hast jealousy killed every noble precept I have taught thee? Art thou as thou wert born, a beast?"

Slowly Keneu rose and stood looking at her. Not a muscle twitched; he was as a majestic bronze.

"Shenandoah," he answered evenly, "never have I thought to win thee. Even when thou wast a child thou hadst ever more love for Loyd Latimer than for me." He spoke in the language of the Delawares, and bitterly. "Be that as it may, I love thee. Thou canst not rule the heart, pale sister; but my love is not the selfish love of the others. My love is the love of the dog that follows, of the slave that serves. Nunanawbiegs hath said this pale-race would bring thee suffering; better die a score of pale-faces. Water-spirits told of weeping, weeping of thy eyes, Shenandoah. Better let the pale-face women weep. But," he added with a touch of scorn, "I am not afraid to die, pale sister. What thou sayest is just. There lies the bow

that sped the arrow," and he let the blanket slip from his shoulders to his crossed arms, leaving his breast bare. His face was as inexpressive as before.

Esther stood looking helplessly at him, and there passed through her mind the words of Richard III daring to flatter Ann; the dead King Henry lying by, and Edward newly buried.

"So here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword,
Which if thou please to hide in this true breast,
And let the soul forth that adoreth thee,
I lay it naked to the deadly stroke,
And humbly beg the death upon my knee;
. . . . . .
But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on."

In that moment she seemed to see Keneu holding her pony's rein, teaching her to shoot the arrow—and a graver remembrance. Once when she was paddling by herself her canoe overturned, and rising, she came up beneath the boat, and would have drowned had not Keneu dived and saved her. Must she in duty take his proffered life?

Keneu watched her indifferently. It was he had taught her skill with the arrow, and none knew better that her aim was sure. Deliberately she pointed the shaft, but downwards, and sent it into the embers of his fire. When the Indian realized what she had done his great frame col-

lapsed, and Keneu the great War Eagle, who would have "died singing" under torture, was crying like an old woman.

She came close to him. "Keneu," she said, bending, "Nunanawbiegs is mad; her grief hath crazed her. Doubtless this paleface looked like the one she lost with sorrow. She thinks that I will wed and lose him; but I shall not wed him, for I do not love him; and besides this, I hold the slayer of all troubles," and she held the sacred feather toward him. Then she turned and left him, lonely, sitting by his solitary fire, a creature without mate or companion, an animal robbed of his birthright.

# CHAPTER IX

## 1748-9

*"Crabbed age and youth*
*Cannot live together.*
*Youth is full of pleasure,*
*Age is full of care;*
*Youth like summer morn,*
*Age like winter weather.*
*Youth like summer brave,*
*Age like winter bare;*
*Youth is full of spirit,*
*Age's breath is short.*

* * * * *

*Oh my love, my love is young."*

*—Shakespeare.*

*"Now, my comrades and brothers in exile,*
*Hath not old custom made this life more sweet*
*Than that of painted pomp?*
*Are not these woods more free from peril than the envious court?*
*Here feel we not the penalty of Adam.*
*The seasons differ as the icy fancy*
*And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,*
*Which, when it bites and blows upon my body*
*Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,*
*This is not flattery, these are my counsellors*
*That feelingly persuade me what I am.*
*Sweet are the uses of adversity*
*Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,*
*Wears yet a precious jewel in his head,*
*And this my life, exempt from public haunt*
*Finds tongues in trees, books in the murmuring brooks,*
*And good in every thing."*

*—Ibid.*

It was September at the Temple, in the year 1748. Esther sat at breakfast with Sir Denis, discussing the contest as to the possession of the Ohio Valley. It was not at this time common talk among their Eastern brothers, but those on

the border already saw trouble brewing regarding the boundaries of the French settlement.

"Pish, Shen! Thou wast ever more French than English," exclaimed Sir Denis, pushing away his buttermilk—a drink of which he was very fond.

"Well, Grandfather," returned Esther, flushing, "Padre Marquette was the first person who ever passed down the Mississippi. And he did claim it for France. 'Tis all very well for you to say 'Treaty of Lancaster, 1744'; but Shagriss swears that not only were the wretches drunk at the time, but the Iroquois never owned a rood of Mississippi land. Sacre! it makes me laugh to hear the settlers talk about 'holding their ground with their hearts' blood.' Wait till the French send down their puppets, all dressed in gold lace and gew gaws, with swords as long as coach whips, and all thy fine colonial settlers will scamper away like prairie dogs, at the first toot of a bugle."

"Truce to thy prating, Shen. Thou hast clean forgot his Majesty. Thou hast never seen the royal army. Gad! there's a wall of iron! There are soldiers! Odds life! When I was a boy in—but that's neither here nor there. All we need is a few battalions and a troop of horse

to drive the French all the way to Quebec, and from there all the way to hell, by George!"

"Grandfather! Dost think the royal troops would ever go to—"

"Aye, and back again, for King George. Hurrah for King George!" shouted Sir Denis, waving a jug of beer.

"Well, I know not how it will end, Da-da; but when I saw Shagriss the other day he gave me a problem which even thou wilt have a hard try to answer. 'If our dear "Fathers" the French,' he said, 'take all the land on one side of the Ohio, and our dear "Brothers" the English take all the land on the other, what particular limb on the family tree are the Indians to swing on?' "

"Why, all the West is open to them."

"All the West! And thou hast said it! With the Pawnees waiting for them on the border and a desert before them in winter!"

"Well, thou art a shameful turncoat, Shen; thou puttest me in mind of the gypsy folk who change their religion to that of each new stopping-place."

"Then Shakespeare is close kin of mine; for sure he can pray as a Romanist, worship with the pagan, and curse with the man of no creed. Ye are sure to reach elevation in the end if ye

try all ways." As she finished, the door flew open and in burst Loyd Latimer, travel-stained and dust-coated, with a hearty:

"Good-morning, Duke; many better, Shen," using his old nicknames, and in as off-hand a way as if he had not been absent for six long months.

Esther had planned exhaustively just how she would greet him—with the most formal of curtsies, and not a word of welcome. But her heart hurt as she noted his haggard looks, and how gaunt his broad frame had grown. As for Loyd himself, her coolness set him into roars of laughter; and catching her up from her curtsy, —as he had been wont when she was a child, he a sturdy boy of twelve,—he held her above him at arms' length. Then dropping her fairly into his arms, cradle fashion, as he had carried her many a mile when she was tired, he looked down at her, his eyes dancing in the old taunting way, and said:

"Art glad to see me, little girl? Thou hadst better say yes, for I have such a pretty gown for thee and a letter from thy constant friend, besides a hat which I'll be sworn would make even *me* look beautific. I shipped seven skins in return. I don't approve of these drygoods donations from Connie; and the bear's rug thou gavest her last year was a poor thing—all hair—

ye Gods!" he rattled on as Esther ran out to inspect the new gifts.

"When I journeyed West yonder sumptuous garment gave me as much concern as triplets. Every wayside inn and outhouse I was filled with fear less some bold bad man should suspect my treasure, dope my wine, and seize the costly merchandise. Ergo, I have tasted naught but foul water and water foul since I left Alexandria. Egad! I was not born a camel; never have I suffered so much for the want of a drink." Here he was interrupted by Ren, who, catching sight of his old friend from the gate, jumped his horse over it, and letting the animal run wild, seized Loyd by both hands and wrung them frantically.

"Caesar's ghost, man! thou hast pulverized my palm, and destroyed the tragic tale I was telling Princess Esther. Faith, 'the tears do stop the flood gates of her eyes.'"

"Ah, Loyd, 'tis pleasant to see ye back. The world has cranked on its hinges since thou hast left us. Not a joke has been cracked—save of my doing."

"Then I'll wager it was a break."

"Loyd, my boy," beamed Sir Denis from the doorway, "How glad I am ye are back. 'We neve' see the virtues of a blessing till 't's away.'"

"Now, and thou cans't find any virtue in me,

so I'll hie me off for Ely!" cried Loyd. By this time Mammy Lucy had sallied forth, seized upon bag and baggage, and carried it off to Esther's room.

"Now, Loy, thy adventure!" said Shen.

"Nay, nay, I have ridden many weary mile, and dreamed of thee on ground harder than thy first biscuits,—albeit, I ate them for the same reason,—and now I would fain see thee in this marvelous creation, and be sure thou guessest the hat."

"But what took thee to Bellevue?"

"My horse, sweetheart."

"And why?"

"Because I beat him."

"Well, if thou wilt act the churl, I'll leave thee!" and Esther ran off to don her new finery.

Crazy Don and Jack soon drifted in, followed by Keneu, and Loyd was the hero of the hour, until a shout from Ren turned all eyes to the door. There stood Shenandoah in what we would now call a clinging Empire,—then said to be made "sack fashion,"—embroidered in pearls not whiter than the gown itself, which falling over a slip of rose and crowned by a great plume-ladened hat made her look like a rare old water-color.

"What a gown for the wilderness!" exclaimed Don.

"Shen, Shen!" expostulated Sir Denis, highly shocked, "thou lookest to me as if thou wast in thy shift."

"Then shift thy thoughts, sir; 'tis the style," said Loyd.

"A bad pun, boy; but if thou art right the age must be a corrupt one. When I was a lad no man could sit next a lady, nearer than a yard for her hoops."

"What a lot of shattered hoops there must have been, verily, Duke. In thy day maids were dressed wondrously like barrels, with hoops and stays and—"

"Loy! If dost not stop punning I will have thee rolled in a barrel. Give us thy tale."

"Ass I may be, but tail I have not. I must pun, Shen. I think it a very genteel art. It betokens that one is so familiar with the language that one can wanton with it. But as to this adventure with a fair damsel in a secluded wood." Mistress Esther sat up suddenly and ceased to examine her gown. "As I have said, I was much concerned for this great prize of mine, and never a place I stopped but I hid it under my coat—"

"Loy! The box is—"

"So when I came to this hostelry the first dainty maid I saw was a veritable Amazon, standing some six feet nine,—aye, of the truth, —and engaged in the noble sport of splitting wood. I smelt danger at once. She will split me, thought I, like a green bay tree, and use yon fair fabric for a sleeve not. 'Hast bed and bite for a hungry saint who has not slept for five days?' And thus she,

" 'Out upon thee for a false man, a wanderer from the faith, a teller of—'

" 'Madam,' quoth I, 'sin I may have, but 'tis not one-fourth as great as my hunger. I came to have my belly, not my ears, filled, else I journey farther.'

"After I had eaten, I went out, and bringing in my ball-gown I repaired to my own room. Straightway I was filled with a wild desire to open thy box. Heaven forbid that I should see any female raiment not meant for the outside. Pondered I, would it be proper or no? Well, I thought, if I do, I will never tell,—which is a fine maxim to use with the ladies,—and I started untying the sacred strings. I felt monstrous guilty, and jumped every time a bug sneezed or a bat coughed. After I had raised the lid it gave me a mighty start, for the thing was all stuffed with billows of paper that

made it seem real as a stone figure. No sooner had I recovered from this terrible shock—from which my nerves will suffer till I hang—than I was thrown into a violent fright by a knocking at my chamber door. Truly, I know nothing more terrifying than knocking. I fell to shaking all over like an aspen leaf, and as gray was I as the back of one. 'Get out!' I yelled, and closed the box as quick as thought. Now I shudder to tell thee what I had on,—not that it would take me long; dear me, no time at all,—but she didn't mind, not she—in strode old seven-foot, with a pine torch as big as a bonfire.

" 'Villain!' she cried, 'thou hast a woman in yonder box.'

" 'Woman,' quoth I, 'how knowest thou this thing?' That stuck her not.

" 'I saw it,' quoth she, 'as I came through the door."

" 'Now I'll take my oath thou hast never gone through a door, but thou mayest have looked through it,' and I took the candle, going toward the portal; she making a dive for the box.

" 'It bites,' called I, to restrain her noble curiosity, then I reached around the door, holding the candle on the far side. There was the crack. 'Woman,' I cried in anger, 'thou hast spied upon me! Hadst no charity, wouldst not

spare my blushes?' Ah, Ren, thou mayest laugh; thou hast doubtless never— But as I was saying, enough of a sad story. I have news for thee, Princess. A real nobleman is even now in our neighborhood—Lord Faixfax, the Duke's friend; and he has planned to lay out a princely manor-house at Greenway. I offered my humble services to help build race-tracks and stables, provided I should have free use of the same; for the man's rich, rich as the King himself. Brushes his teeth in champagne, shaves in Canary, and takes a bath in grog."

"What, Thomas as near as that! Good news, boy! Good of a surety." So Sir Denis; but Esther's face flamed and she looked half annoyed.

"Shen, do thou take Loyd and paddle down to see his lordship. I will pen thee a line to take, and explain that my gout was too bad to go myself."

"I will run change my gown, then," remarked Esther, starting for the hall.

"Nay, leave it, lass, it vastly becomes thee; and I would fain have Thomas find some beauty in my family."

"Why, Da-da," said Esther, mischievously, "I thought it was like my shift."

"Well, so it looked to me, minx; but an it be the style, 'twill please his lordship."

"Fie on thee, Da-da. For the matter of that, I'll venture the real thing would please his lordship. I'll change it straightway."

"Out upon thee for a forward piece, Shen! Let be, I tell thee, and fetch me quill and ink."

So it happened that Lord Fairfax was suddenly startled that morning by a rosy apparition curtsying in the sunlit doorway of Greenway Court.

"Welcome to the wilderness, my Lord," said Esther, demurely, eyes cast down.

"Now!" ejaculated his lordship. " 'Can any mortal mixture of earth-mould breathe such divine, enchanting perfection?' I am too glad to see thee!" and the old fellow looked it as he bent over her hand.

He was tall and gaunt, Thomas Fairfax, but his white hair and courtly manner lent a certain charm to his aspect.

"Why, come in, come in! My house is not yet ready for inspection, though. I had hoped to lay low till it was, and then have James down; but ah, this is a great honor; thou art such a sweet child to take pity on an old lonely fellow. Come look at my roses. I had the plants put in

but a short time gone, and behold, they are all in bloom."

As he talked he led the way to his roses, and clipping every bud and blossom in merciless profusion, he gathered them up with trembling fingers and held them out to the fair-tinted maid at his side. They were of every color a rose owns, but oddly enough the effect was quaint, and not displeasing. As they re-entered the house Esther paused to look at a tiny sketch of George which lay on the center-table. Lord Fairfax drew close to her and looked into her face a little anxiously.

"A fine-looking young fellow, a fine-looking young fellow," he observed. "Isn't he?" he added, trying to read the maiden's expression.

"Very like your Lordship, for all you are of no kin," replied Esther, half amused, half-pouting at his tremulous anxiety. "Though I fancy at his age thou wast a shade taller."

This last had a magic effect on his lordship; he beamed with delight.

"Thou art a sweet little baggage, sweet," and opening the table drawer he produced a miniature of a slender youth of passing good feature, and presented it to her, with evident pride.

Esther looked gravely at it, and then at him.

"Thou art handsomer than of old, Lord Fair-

fax," quoth the small diplomat. To tell the truth, she could no more help flirting than being pretty; and after all, Sir Thomas was a lord, and marvelous rich, quite a card—just to show the magic circle that hearts were trumps wherever Mistress Esther journeyed. But Lord Fairfax only knew that he was oddly rejuvenated by her warm young presence, and that it was a glorious red-touched autumn day. The last—the feeling about the day—he mentioned when they had reached the porch and Esther was arranging her roses.

"This makes me think of a poem I once wrote," she remarked dreamily.

"Methinks the rose bears ne'er so sweet a look as when
Its open petals threaten to depart.
Nor know we all its mystic charm till then—
Alas too late—we find it holds a heart."

There was stillness on the little veranda at Greenway, save for the chirping of an insect under the step. Sir Thomas pondered deeply and long. Just why had she said that, and just which way could one take it? Well, surely she meant it pleasantly, for was not that a smile that made those little dimples?

"Ah!" he exclaimed suddenly, "if some one was crazy about thee and thou wast crazy about him, what a hell of a craziness there would be!

But pooh! what am I palavering about? Thou must stay for lunch of course, of course," and he hurried in-doors, stumbling over Joe in the hall.

"Odds life! What in thunder art skulking about the door for?" blustered the somewhat flustered nobleman. "Thou art damned inquisitive, damned inquisitive!" and striding into an inner room he continued in a tone fondly imagined to be a whisper—every syllable of which could be plainly heard by Esther on the porch, "What hast thou for dinner? Mistress Denis bides for it to-day. Hast those sweetmeats I ordered sent, and the marmalade Mistress Fairfax prated so much of?"

Esther's lips tightened ominously, and her nostrils expanded in wrath. Sweetmeats, indeed! She was no child for whom to plan candy and marmalade; but she was somewhat mollified when he concluded:

"Hast unpacked the plate as yet? See thou dost at once. Try if ye can find flowers for the center."

Dinner over, they set out for Esther's boat, which she had insisted upon paddling down alone, with only Kratrim in the bow.

As they walked over the pine needles, Esther holding her roses in one hand, her gown with the other, Lord Fairfax felt a strange throbbing in

his being, an echo, it seemed, of youthful love awakened by the charm and vitality of this girl who held "the best of three nations."

"Ah," he said softly, walking so close that his breath stirred her soft bright hair, and was warm on her forehead, "wilt take off thy glove, my fair? 'Tis long since I have felt the touch of a sympathetic hand."

Esther completely annihilated any sentimental effect of his remark by handing him her roses and removing the glove in such a matter-of-fact way that no one could have attached any significance to the action. But before Lord Fairfax could take possession of the "sympathetic hand" so exposed, they came upon a group which put a stop to soft speech.

The party in question were variously disposed about a small cleared space walled in by trees. They were strong, rough-looking men armed with rifles, pistols and knives. Deerskin leggings above moccasins added to their wild look, but the whole was certainly picturesque.

"Why, 'tis the 'Black Hunter'!" cried Esther, as one left the others and came toward them. His face, furrowed by sorrow-lines, wore the look of a man with a mania; an uncontrollable, all-engrossing purpose, upon which his life pivoted.

"Shenandoah," he said, taking her hand,—gently for a brush fighter,—"I would have scarce known ye for the fine dress. 'Twas not so ye were geared the night ye went with us to track down 'White-man's-terror.' "

"Captain Jack," she rejoined, "this is Lord Fairfax, an English nobleman who has come to live amongst us."

And Captain Jack, rude and fiercely accoutered, strode forward, extending his hand to my lord, who was brave in quilted silk fitting him closely, broad turned-down collar to the shoulder, and mantle to match. Beside them Mistress Esther in the filmy creation of French art, and around them the hardy foresters,—the girl's life-long friends and comrades,—every one of whom would have given his scalp for her at any moment. She turned toward them with her sweet manner, half of the child, and mingling with them paused to take a hand at cards, calmly annexing two fine skins in as many deals. Then went off laughing, the men waving their hats—or pistols as might be—and giving her a deep-chested "God speed ye, little un!"

The voyage up the river was one to make a man dream. The canoe slipped with the current. Across the water fell the red glow from the sunset. Red gold also were the leaves about

them, and red gold were the lights in my lady's hair, which hung all fluff and curls about her trustful blue eyes, black lashed, and straight glanced. Rare was the music of the water, as was also the murmur of the maiden's soft voice, so full of silvery cadence. Rare was the curve of her strong white arm which drew the paddle here and there in steering. Rare the voice of a lingering dove afar off, speaking over and over the word which sways the wide world. But rarer than all these was the walk from the river to the Temple in the silver twilight. Myriad night watchers chimed in rhythm. The woods rang with locusts. Here a tree-frog from a high branch struck a chord in unison with a cricket beneath; and there came the fluttering of wings as the wild birds of the forest sought their roosts. All making a soft sea of sound upon which the soul floated higher than the dim scene, into a fancy world.

"Mistress Esther," said the old chevalier, and his voice came back to his ears with an unreal sound, " 'tis the gloaming of life where I wander, thou art in the noontide; 'twixt morning and afternoon, childhood and womanhood. Every day we see these stages linked together. Dost believe 'tis right they should be, or thinkest thou they were better separated?"

Esther scarcely knew what to answer, and was delighted when they were again interrupted by the approach of Othello—the butler at the Temple—accompanied by some half dozen slaves, with pine knots, and in another moment they stood in the blaze of light coming through the wide-thrown doors of the house itself. Forth came Sir Denis, both hands out, and around him all the magic circle, each with a frank smile and an eager hand for the stranger.

"Ah, Thomas, this is like meeting in another world," Sir James said earnestly. 'Twill place the bright court in the shadow. Ah, 'sweet are the uses of adversity' which brought us here, where God has given every man a heritage to make the King grow envious, and Europe lose her charms."

# CHAPTER IX

## 1749

*"For she was full of amiable grace, and manly terror mixed there withall,*
*That as the one stirred up the affections, hence so the other did men's rash desire appall."*
*—Spenser*

Wind, sleet and snow, cutting cold; great fires roaring; table crowded with huge high-piled platters still simmering; the sideboard heaped with cakes, and puddings ready for the fire-sauce. So was winter held at the Temple. Every day seemed as a modern Christmas-tide, for who drew up there to the good cheer had no task save that of scouring the woods. Now and then some one like Gist, with a home and family, stopped in, wearing a care-worn look, but never departed save with a hamper of good things as a present to his dame. Warm-hearted, open-handed Sir Denis, and his soft-eyed, sympathetic granddaughter were a pair to attract hordes of friends even in a wilderness.

Esther stood by the fire, her hair loose and glittering with half-melted snow, face crimson with the slaps of the rude wind, teeth shining bright under her flexible lips.

As she drew off her gauntlets she entertained the magic circle with a merry account of a late visit to Greenway.

"Faith, 'tis a soft lair the old fox hath snuggled into; but I'll wager he's sorry now that he sleeps outside the main house, though I have my suspicions he never moves from bed lest we appear, but keeps Joe trotting to fetch food. I'll be sworn, Da-da, his library rivals thine. Mr. Washington says—"

"What! George there?" broke in Sir Denis. "No word hast said of his coming."

Esther stopped in confusion, and Loyd went out to the dining-room—ostensibly to test the Scotch.

"Oh, did I not?" she said half impatiently. "Well, 'tis no great matter. He was there, and will be here this even, albeit he would have ridden back with me, but I bade him tarry. I'll up and change my wear, 'tis soaked." And she withdrew a trifle hastily.

George Croghan and Captain Jack exchanged glances. Sir Denis looked the picture of pleased satisfaction; 'twas well, thought he.

"Law me, baby," gossiped Mammy Lucy as she brushed Esther's hair, that young lady ad-

justing a patch near the eye, with greatest concern.

"Dey talks 'bout white folks havin' mo' sense dan de niggers. Lan'! I done heah over dar at man 'Gruders he beat his chile half deaf, an' ain't scarcely any time he ain't drunk."

"Why, how old is the child, Mammy?" asked Esther, with lively interest.

" 'Taint mo' 'an twelve y'ars; an' dey do say he done cut holes in huh back, right froo."

"Nonsense, Mammy!" rebuked Esther. "You people are great romancers; that's unbelievable."

The tale troubled Esther, however; and when George Croghan gave a similar account at dinner, she listened without comment but with eager attention.

Washington came about eight, his coat stiff with ice, and his face cracking from the cold. Esther met him at the door and bade him haste up stairs, where Wellington—Sir Denis's own man—soon had the young fellow bundled up in one of "de Marse's" fur-lined dressing gowns, close to the blazing hearth, and plied him with smoking drinks.

"Bettah take yo' dinner up heah, Mars George; you's clean tuckered out."

"Nay, nay, I'll go down," remonstrated George.

"Lord, honey," beamed Mammy Lucy, who was busy piling coverlets on his fourposter and warming the sheets with a fire-pan, "'tain't nobody goin' to be dar. Dey's all done and gone."

"Where is Mistress Esther?" queried Washington eagerly.

"Doan' know, chile; she done order 'tail-sticking-up' for nine 'clock, an' I'se laid out her clo'es. She ain't goin' to be 'way long dough. Yoh sit right heah, honey. Marsa James done got de gouts tur'ble, an' 's gone to baid."

So did Mammy Lucy adopt every visitor at the Temple, treating them the same whether they were young and childlike or old and reserved.

The candle on the broken old table flickered dismally, threatening every moment to go out entirely. The fire on the hearth was scarcely brighter than the tremulous light on the table. Even the long sleek rats which ran here and there, heedless of consequences, seemed cold and in a hurry to get back to their nests.

There were no chairs in the room, save a rude stool, and the viands on the table were poor, with no visible means of eating them provided. The dust dabbed away from the board unevenly.

Wild rushes of rain, mingled with snow, dashed madly against the outer logs of the shack, and drove in through the chinks.

The girl on the hearth shrank and shivered at each burst of the storm, and her black eyes seemed grown large with continuous fear. One hand held her scant slip about her, while the other was thrust half in her mouth—both for warmth, and to keep down the screams that would come.

At last there sounded a voice above the moan of the wind without. At this she started up and ran around the room in an agony of fright. The door was flung open and a man filled its frame. He stood there a moment, blear-eyed, and laughing stupidly. Then entering, he staggered to the hearth, kneeling down stiffly and holding his hands fairly into the blaze itself.

"What's for supper? What's for supper?" he repeated. The girl answered timidly there were only maize cakes.

"No meat!" he cried, springing up, and there followed a volley of vile vituperation.

The girl fell to crying nervously; then as he lurched nearer she gave a cry of terror as an animal might in anguish, and fled behind the table. As she did so the door gave to the stroke

of an ax, and the man reeled back, Loyd and Ren catching him each by an elbow. Esther, following the boys, had her arms about the sobbing Isabelle.

But Shen was not one to waste time on condolence in a dark winter night six miles from home. She hurried her charge outside, unstrapped a great coat from her saddle and wrapped it around the shivering girl. Then swinging, great coat and all, on Adjidaimo's pillion, mounting herself and calling to the boys and to Keneu, who was holding their horses a short distance away, she was off through the night.

So chanced it next morning, when young Washington came down to breakfast in the sunbright dining-room, he found only the magic circle without its center, with Sir Denis devouring innumerable squares of corn-pone and jugs of home brew. By the time Washington was seated, however, two figures in the doorway caused every one to spring up. One was Mistress Esther in a chintz-garlanded morning gown of gay rose and thorn; the other, a pale, shrinking, black-eyed lass, a hint of the servile in her shyness. It seemed as if all the blood in her was at the lips, for they were wonderfully

red, though thin. Her nostrils were delicate and oddly white. Her hair, which was parted and drawn back in a single braid, though coarse, was heavy, long and black, without a light.

Only Captain Jack drew away as the others gave the newcomer a warm greeting and a place nearest the fire logs. And later, as he trudged over the ice-coated sticks of the forest, he remarked gruffly to his friend George Croghan:

"Nay, I like her not. She looks close as life to her dead mother—Kenabeck, the Indians called her, as a snake she was too. It was she who jilted young Cole, and married this hedevil, Gruder. Little good could come of two such. She doped, and he caught the habit from her. She gave him a sip too much one night, and while he slept was off with his hard-gotten earnings and a half-breed who had been hanging about, like a whipped cur, trying to get the cash or the woman—or both."

"And then what?" asked Croghan, disgustedly.

"Oh, what always does happen. He threw her over—the cliff—in a few days; said she fell; and was off with the money."

"Poor errin' critter," said Croghan.

"No, I used to think that; but remember, she left the child behind. She oughter had worse."

"Didst catch the look this one shot at young George when they met?"

"Aye, 'twas like her mother, too; snakes is the name for that pair. And the devil's a snake, so goes the sayin'. Not that she will ever do Washington hurt. His love is other where,—as every man's is who has seen the Princess,—but the little varmint's got her eye on him, and she will do her best. Love first, hate afterwards—it's in the blood."

"Perhaps ye think that every Frenchman who paddles a canoe in the Atlantic Ocean could claim all undiscovered lands for the King of France, and when England found, settled, and made treaties for these lands—hitherto unknown —France could claim them because they dipped into the sea!"

George's face was deep flushed, and his tones had a very angry ring; nor did the flash Mistress Esther sent him from her expressive orbs leave any doubt that she was getting into a fine pet.

"Well, as far as that goes, why don't the English step calmly into France itself, and say that they have formed a treaty with some Italians for the land. This territory has to be fought over now; but if England had such a

marvelous strong claim it could be settled by arbitration."

" 'Tis easy to see that thou art not an English subject in thought, Mistress Esther."

The spinning-wheel before Esther fell with a crash, so suddenly did she spring up. You who are American without the abject worship of a King in your hearts know not how deadly was this accusation. Washington's brain surged, and he swayed as he said it—for once aroused his anger was overwhelming. He took a sort of dizzy delight in his daring. Worsted in argument, he had been vexed at first, and when Shen had crowed a trifle over her victory he had forgotten himself. Now she moved to the window and swung it open. The sunshine rested blindingly on the snow without. The wave of her hand, and her pose of scorn and dismissal were unmistakable. A sick feeling stole over him. What meant France and England—nay, all the world? If they fought, must he be at war also, and be put out of heaven through a French window?

"Don't keep me waiting, please, Mr. Washington," said my lady with a little gesture of impatience. 'Tis cold holding this."

Slowly Washington passed out, crushed with a sense of his own rudeness. His idea of justice

prevented him from making a single plea. He felt she was right. Had any other man dared to accost her even in those tones, that man had died.

With the tragic acceptance of a decision sometimes given to the young, George walked toward the stables, feeling like a man fallen from paradise with a very hard thump at the end, and mounting his horse rode away—he thought—for the last time. How many and heart breaking are the "last times" of youth!

Back in the low-ceiled room Mistress Esther, the proud, the haughty, was walking up and down; hands opening and closing excitably, and sobs gathering in her throat.

"I *do* wish," she said aloud, "I did not cry whenever I have been very angry. It is so aggravating— O Loy!" she beamed as that young gentleman entered, and running to meet him she actually hugged his big shoulders, an unheard-of performance for her, which would surely have provoked Loyd into taking the "first one" had he not been absolutely overcome, indeed quite frightened, by these unwonted gymnastics.

"Jove, Shen! what has happened? Thou hast not fallen in love, or killed a grizzly, or is it a letter?"

"Nothing at all. *Do* pick up my spinning-wheel. Thou shouldst know I do not incline toward killing bears when I am in low neck 'negligee'; and besides, how cold it is without. Why, the air is awful!"

Loyd was quite practical enough to reflect that she presumably had not been wandering outdoors in low neck either; but he was a wise man in so much as he asked women no questions, knowing that everything they can, or will tell, they have; hence he merely said:

"Cold! why the words froze in my mouth riding over, and I had to thaw them out with six glasses of Scotch. Then they melted and turned into hot air—not the Scotch or the glasses, ye understand."

The situation was saved.

# CHAPTER X

## 1750

*"While you here do snoring lie,*
*Open eyed conspiracy*
*His time doth take."*

*—Shakespeare.*

Wild was the excitement at the Temple. Loyd was perched high on the back of a chair, the seat of which Ren constantly threatened to forsake. Esther stood handing up garlands of crowsfoot and evergreens which lined the walls. While Crazy Don and Jack staggered in with a superb rug of four bear-skins, which filled the entire center of the room: this decoration being a Christmas gift in advance. Keneu, not to be left behind, followed with a huge buck's head and antlers, which had been prepared by him months beforehand, to add to Esther's already splendid collection.

A present from Captain Jack filled another corner of the room, in the form of a great arm-chair made of three deer heads, the largest crowning the back, and two small ones forming each an arm. The body of this strange seat was covered with the animals' skins.

All these gave the room an artistic and even a luxurious look, which was a subject of much pride to the friendly givers.

The main cause for excitement this morning was not that Christmas was but two days away, but that a very welcome guest was expected the evening of that day. Esther was to leave within the hour to greet her friend some ten miles thence, and the boys planned riding all the way back to their distant home to "furbish up"; for let it be known that the coming visitor was the long talked of Constance, the "wonderful English beauty." And as they worked, Esther told them all over again about this paragon, they listening with many expressions of glee, which were in truth provoked by their delight in Esther's radiant happiness.

"O Esther, thou love!" cried Constance, slipping from her horse and hanging her whole weight on Esther's neck, as little maidens are wont to do, unable to squeeze hard enough otherwise.

The ride through the snow-piled woods was one of delight and chatter. Connie, gay in her bright scarlet habit, which almost touched the white-carpeted earth; Esther, a veritable Rosa-

lind, holding her friend's bridle, that she might be nearer, and devouring every word.

When they reached the Temple the candles were already lit, and Constance, having bestowed a kiss on both Sir Denis's cheeks,—much to that gentleman's delight,—tore upstairs. Hat and habit flew off, quickly replaced by a splendid gown, and wonderful coiffure, with its tall ostrich plumes and lacings of ribbon. All patches and powder and cunning, unexpected ruffs was this little lady, a veritable puff-ball of loveliness.

How full of smiles and coquettish glances, roguish banter, and flirts with her fan was she, when Esther—nigh bursting with pride—presented her to the magic circle; and the circle fell down and worshiped in due form.

Once at table, Loyd started up to give the first toast:

"Here's to Montresser, God bless her! Hurrah!
Though we may not caress her to-day;
We'll ne'er cease to press her for aye!
Here's to Montresser!

An unpleasant sense of newness stole over Esther as she heard this lifelong toast so remodeled for another. Nor did the feeling depart when, after supper, Mistress Constance handed her vinaigrette to Jack, fan to Ren, and the tiny

bit of lace and perfumes she dignified by the name of handkerchief, to Loyd; and sitting down on the little stool by the harpsichord broke into a bird-like song. Her voice was not so full or strong as Esther's, but had a sweet plaintive note that drew uproars of applause.

Listening to these songs so whimsically pathetic and sad at times, Esther thought of Washington—

"And you'll tak the highroad,
And I'll tak the low road,
And I'll get to Scotland before ye;
But I and my true love
Will never meet again,
By the bonny, bonny banks of Lake Lawmand."

Was Washington perhaps her true love, and had she barred him out forever that day she locked the French window? Why, what is this! —Mistress Esther giving sad thought to an absent swain with all the circle about her!

"Hoot, lass! but ye can step it like the bonny maids at home." This from Don, who was strumming gaily on his instrument and at the same time treading a measure with Mistress Connie; who, holding her lace and ruffles at a tantalizing height, was doing a Highland fling in a manner which showed to advantage the tiny black slippers with bright red heels, above which flashed

silk stockings with crimson clocks, which Loyd remarked "kept excellent time."

Sir Denis from the doorway—having for the first time Esther could remember deserted his armchair at the table—clapped in rhythm to the music. Even Mammy Lucy peeped over his shoulder and gave an exclamation of wonder and delight at the fetching performance.

From this gay scene its one-time center slipped unnoticed, and catching a coat from the hall pegs went out—slippers and all—into the windy night. 'Twas some distance to the stable, but Esther went on unheeding, and entering Adjidaimo's stall laid her head on his silky side, saying with a break in her voice:

"*You* love me, don't you, pet!"

The break seemed so pathetic that she fell to crying over its pitiful sound, and so did not hear the big doors swing open and Captain Jack lead in a borrowed horse.

"Why, Shenden, what on earth ails ye?" cried that honest old woodsman, flashing the light of his lantern full on the tear-marked face.

"There, there, dear," he went on, putting down the light and gathering her gently into his arms. "Tell thy old pal what is it that ails ye."

"Nothing, nothing," she protested, cuddling close to his rude leathern jacket, making it for-

ever sacred and priceless with her tears. As she did so there came a pounding of hoofs without, and a gay "Sacre bleu! Quelle glasse!" drifted in through the wide-flung door.

'Why, where in the deuce it The Girl?" cried Loyd all at once. A sudden stillness fell on the company. They looked at one another like children caught in the act. At this moment Isabella—who had hidden upstairs all the evening, standing in dread of this unseen wonder who was to come—arrived upon the scene, and stood uncertain in the doorway.

"Where is Mistress Denis, minx?" demanded Constance in a tone that accused the girl of murder, abduction, and conspiracy in a single breath.

Isabella hesitated, looking a little frightened.

"Don't *any* one know?" fretted Constance. "Nice lot of devoted swains *ye* are. Bah! in England a girl's love never lets her out of his sight." This rebuke was all the more vehement as Constance felt most to blame, having been the unwitting cause of Esther's neglect.

"I suppose they are using field-glasses on ye now," retorted Loyd somewhat viciously, at the same time guiltily dropping behind some greens the square of lace he held.

"Mister Latimer, thou art a horrid, sarcastic

beast!" snapped the little lady, inwardly deliberating if a storm of tears or a haughty exit was more in season. Her reflections were cut short, however, by a vastly attractive tableau in the doorway. Jean Ardean, tall, dark-haired and slender, his gay uniform flashing back the light of candles and fire, his eyes dancing with triumph and lively dislike for the others, stood with Shenandoah clinging to his arm, as she had never done to any of them. It was undoubtedly his hour.

"Mais compliments," he observed, as Constance was presented, scarcely glancing her way and striding to the hearth. "Ah, what a lovely talk Mademoiselle and I have had while you haf been dancing. Ah, I wish Madame would come often to gif me Papion and heaven."

"I am not a 'Madame,' Sir Tête-à-tête!" retorted Mistress Constance, piqued at the indifference of this handsome young officer. Truth told, Mistress Connie worshiped brass buttons.

"Oh, reallie?" he observed lazily. "Forgive the *faux pas*. Papion is so young she makes every one seem *vieille*. Pardon," and Monsieur Jean condescendingly showed a row of such very white teeth that Connie bit her own small mouth in vexation.

The magic circle rallied to their old standard

with a rush. As Esther sat down in the big deer-seat, Don slipped unceremoniously to the floor, and nestling close to her knee reached up for her hand, laying his cheek pleadingly against her palm.

Not to be left out, Connie perched upon one antlered chair-arm, and slipped a dimpled hand around her friend's neck. And as Othello brought Jean a great flagon of the best the Frenchman raised it high above the mantel, and sang with the enthusiasm belonging to his French blood the old endearing toast, and the rest joined with him instantly, despite their dislike for the man, and fairly shouted:

"Here's to Essa, God bless her! Hurrah!
Though we may not caress her to-day,
We'll ne'er cease to press her for aye!
Here's to Essa!"

Ere dawn next morning Esther and Constance were busy preparing for a momentous departure on a foxhunt. They were to stay the night at some hostelry, with Lord Fairfax as host, and return on Christmas eve.

Constance was what Jean would have styled *"folle de joie,"* and be it confessed Mammy Lucy was much delighted in bedecking the new young "Mistus" with the big black hat.

"Lud, Shen," giggled Mistress Montressor,

glancing coyly at Esther, who was adjusting a hunting-shirt of dyed deerskin, " 'tis marvelous queer dressing, while thou art donning those habits. It makes me feel as if I were in the wrong room, or something."

"Bah, Connie! thou art man-crazy," scoffed Esther, not a little pleased at her friend's admiring gaze.

"Well, Shenden, when thou comest to see me in England it must be so. I will say thou art a tobacco king, and thou hast 'followed me o'er land and sea.' I'll be bound thou wouldst have all the belles in London pulling caps for thee, and could tell me all the scandalous things ye got them to do."

By this time they were in the breakfast-room, where Lord Fairfax already waited to be off, and after a standing breakfast—luscious, for all that—they were away, with hounds, horn and dash of hoofs. A crowd of small darkies watched them out of sight, and the devoted Mammy Lucy stood with Isabelle in the doorway. Jean, who gave everything a French nickname,—from his "Butterfly" for Esther, to "Roi de coeur" for Sir Denis,—promptly called the new addition to the household "Clochette,"—"little belle,"—and seemed to take quite a fancy to her, honoring her with a kiss in the hallway

ere breakfast, and a wave of his hat on departing.

'Twas a thoroughly jaded, mud-bespattered, but still laughing company which dismounted that night at the very inn where dwelt Loyd's fair damsel of the wood-cutting feats.

While Jack battered at the fast-closed portal, Loyd whispered in Shen's ear, "Beware of the cracked door." But Esther only tossed her head, till the fox's brush, stuck in her hat-band, waved again.

The giant hostess seemed in a wonderfully good humor, for she waited upon them with alacrity; and joining in the conversation with all the freedom of the frontier, declared to Loyd:

"Now ye are not weary, ye only think it. Pray and ye will be revived."

Latimer sprang up suddenly, and catching a saddle-blanket from its corner, wrapped it about him, and posing in a truly clerical manner, turned upon her.

"Woman, why sayest thou that?" he demanded.

" 'Let he who hath faith pray, and he may accomplish all things; so walked Christ on the face of the waters,' " half-chanted she in reply.

"Hark ye, dame," quoth Loyd, his voice

really eloquent, though little devils lurked in his merry eyes. "Through knowledge divine, of the laws of God, Christ ruled all things. Not faith, but uttermost understanding. If we so knew nature's laws, so could we; but we are not gods, so we must learn. We are not born with insight. Neither with faith can we accomplish what wisdom and faith together can bring about. God, who knoweth all things, can so rule them. As a child, believe and learn, and thou shalt find how to rule the world." Seeing that his jest had turned to earnest, Loyd sat down hastily in confusion.

"Gad, Loyd, thou art quite an orator," said Lord Fairfax, slapping the ex-preacher on the back.

"Mr. Latimer, wilt convert me?" cried Mistress Connie, making a moue at him across the rough table.

They sat late, this jolly party of hunters, and ate a hearty meal, for all there were scant table furnishings. When at last Esther signed to him, Loyd sallied out and with Ren's aid brought in the dark blankets each man had strapped to his saddle, and with great ceremony these were turned over to the ladies' use.

Once the fair had retired, their chevaliers stretched themselves side by side, frontier fash-

ion, before the fire, and were soon—oh, horrible and unpoetic thought!—snoring. Not so Constance and her hostess, who, girl-like, dawdled over their night toilet—actually, to the utter mystification of the giantess, *washing*.

Suddenly Connie seized Esther's arm with that iron grip very small persons some time possess, and they both sat listening. "Seven-foot" had left them for the night, and all had been quite still, but now they could hear two or three persons passing softly upstairs and into the adjoining room. In a few moments the two maidens had to stop their mouths to keep from laughing aloud, for some one next had made a light—and behold, Loyd's crack in the door! But what came through this famous aperture soon brought them to silence.

Perhaps it would have been more ethereal for these damsels to stop their ears with cotton and seek sleep and ignorance; but they had no cotton, and besides they understood French, which was being spoken.

"So the old Marquis has begun to *do* something at last?"

"Indeed, yes. Celeron de Bienneville is preparing to start for the Ohio. He has a budget of presents for his dear relations, the red men; and something better, three hundred men."

"Mon dieu! so many? What will he tell the English?"

"Ah, that is simple. They come to make peace among the tribes, and while they are doing so they have leaden plates by the score, with 'This land belongs to the King of France' stamped upon them. These they will nail to every tree."

"And who think you is here in this very inn, not a hundred paces from that door? Why, the English nobleman, Lord Fairfax. And—be quiet—our friend and brother, Jean."

"Who—not Jean Ardean? Why, he should be in Richmond ere now, feeling the pulse of the colony, and dropping about some of that fine English of his."

"Oh, 'tis a woman of course, as ever, with that unhappy man. A *jeunne fille* this time. La, la! a veritable goddess in breeches. Didst ever see a saint in top-boots? Well, add a touch of the Devil about the eye, a blush every moment, and a dimple at every corner, and you have her."

"Diable! Give me the one in scarlet."

"Sacre—saints! Don't sit there prating of women. You are as bad as Jean himself. I have been thinking, why not get the prize who snores below, and when war is announced we will have a valuable prisoner for exchange.

What sayest thou? We could gag the old fellow and carry him out with a bag over his head."

"Well thought on! Who's here? Ha, Jean, by my life!"

A short colloquy followed. Esther slipped to the door of her own room, pistol in hand.

"Nay, I'll have none of it!" came Jean's voice in angry tones—albeit Monsieur Jean was perfectly aware that the room joined Esther's.

"You are grown wondrously touchy and tender, for a spy, Monsieur Ardean," sneered one of the men.

"A spy in war I may be, but I could never do anything that would reflect dishonor on myself or country. The bond 'twixt host and guest is stronger than blood-ties. I shall not break it."

"But, Jean, for five hundred francs."

"Stop! not for gold, or fame, or love would I betray my host," said Jean dramatically.

"Oh, Shen," whispered Connie, "he is just like Mr. Kemble in the play—"

"Be still!" admonished Esther; but the men in the next room seemed to have accepted the command without hearing it, for silence reigned throughout the inn.

# CHAPTER XI

## 1751

*"Oh heart, heavy heart,*
*Why sigh'st thou without breaking?*
*Because thou canst not ease thy smart,*
*By friendship nor by speaking."*
*—Shakespeare.*

The year 1751, the year before the war of the frontier, held little of interest for Esther, save a letter from Constance, who was on a visit to Bellevue; but had not time to journey o'er the wilderness, as she was busy preparing to marry "Tom."

Connie's note was a sort of flurry of disjointed bits mainly concerning the excited narrator. One paragraph, however, is of interest, and seems quite clear and readable, considering the source.

"We are all frightfully proud of Mr. Washington, who has grown so reserved and sad. Thou wouldst have much ado to know him. What think ye! Laurence Washington, his half-brother, has gotten him an appointment as Major, with a hundred and fifty pounds a year—not that that is a fortune, for a choice bit of gossip is flying about, that he asked Mistress Carey's Pa, and what does the old gentleman

say, but that his daughter is accustomed to driving in her own carriage—I am quite sure she wilt never in mine—I think she is a fright. All the men like her. I am of the opinion that Sir Carey made a blunder. Laurence Washington is dying, and all the world knows he will not leave Georgie penniless; for behold even now, broken-hearted, crossed-in-love, he has gone off to the Barbadoes with his ailing brother, and probably will find consolation in the dark eyes of— But that reminds me, Tom—"

Esther sat long with this letter in her hand. At last she asked hesitatingly:

"Da-da, when we were in the East, dost remember a maid by name of Carey, Miss Mary Carey?"

"Aye, that I do; and why?"

"Nothing, nothing at all. Was she well favored?"

"Passing."

"Was she *very* fair, Da-da?" with energy.

"Oh, very fair, very fair, I should say."

So the year 1751 wore away, and 1752 saw the return of George from the Barbadoes, and the death of Lawrence at the latter's home.

Rumors came in like fire-brands from the border that the French were pushing up from Louisiana, along the Mississippi, and intended

making a barrier of forts from the former to Canada, thus hemming in the English.

Such radical moves as their behavior at Piqua —the town of the Twightwees—showed that the French were in earnest.

In 1753 Trent was dispatched to remonstrate with Captain Reparti, who was stationed on the Ohio, regarding the transgressions upon the English claim; but he returned minus success.

October 29th of the same year Washington received instructions to take up Trent's unaccomplished task. He was to push on to Logstown, thence to the new French commander, Chevalier de St. Pierre, and having delivered Governor Dinwiddie's letter of expostulation, not waiting there above a week for a reply, demand an escort to guard him on his return. All this Washington prepared to do, and having received his official answers from the courteous, silver-haired French officer, he set out from French creek with an escort,—principally of his own providing,—and made a weary march to Venango.

December 25th Washington set off once more, but it was a rough journey. He was glad of one thing, his old acquaintance, Pioneer Gist, was with him; and it was Gist who offered to guide him on foot by a short route home. The

horses were fairly exhausted, and there was something vastly alluring about the bold tramp through this wild country. Washington and Gist were soon trudging along unattended, on the point of entering a small village which rejoiced in the cheerful appellation of Murdering-town. Here they were surprised to find a party of Indians awaiting them, one of whom greeted Gist with apparent joy. The hardy woodsman looked the savage over from head to heel, and when the Indian began to ply them with many questions, gave such unexpected answers that truth-telling Washington was lost in wonder. Still more to George's surprise, Gist ended by engaging the Indian as a guide.

Their new attendant was most obliging, taking Washington's pack and starting off at a great rate. He seemed all very well, but Washington began to feel tired as never before, and suspected also they were veering too much to the northeast. He decided to camp. This enraged the Indian, who declared they would all be scalped, for there were foes everywhere about them. His cabin was near, he said. They would see.

They walked on, with their eyes open, for nigh two miles, and saw nothing of the kind. In vain the noble red man held forth, declaring he heard

whoops, gun shots, nay even voices from the supposed cabin. Washington announced he would camp at the next water.

They had come to an open space, when suddenly the Indian, who was some way ahead, turned and deliberately covered them with his rifle. America would have been fatherless to the end of time had not a pair of lithe young arms caught the savage by the neck and thrown him, face down, to earth.

Washington and Gist ran forward, and would have dispatched the warrior straightway had not Esther interfered.

"Nay, nay!" she cried, "he was but doing his duty. He is a friend of mine. Let be."

"Why, Shen! where in heaven did ye come from?" ejaculated Gist, absolutely mystified.

"I will tell you both when you are safe; but let's be off, for there are more of these back a ways," she answered, whistling to Adjidaimo. She did not mount, however, but swung along by them on foot.

Washington was thrilled with excitement and delight that she had seemingly cast aside their former estrangement, and he decided to make a desperate effort to tell her, as soon as alone, what he had so long yearned to say; in the words of his boyish journal—

"Ah woe is me, that I should love and conceal;
Long have I wished and never dared reveal."

A crash in the brush brought him out of his reverie, but it was only Kratrim, Esther's faithful companion and guard when she willed to go alone.

"Look ye, brother," she remarked to the Indian, speaking in that worthy native's tongue, "we have not need of thee in the nightime. Get thee to thy nearby cabin, and in the morning bring us meat."

Gist, who understood something of what passed, was for killing the brave and avoiding any further treachery, but Esther was firm.

'Nay, Christopher," she protested, "Owaissa has been a good friend to me always, and I'll not stand by and see him killed."

As soon as the Indian had left them, Esther turned to Washington, with one of those friendly smiles which made children and dogs follow her.

"We had best hasten," she said, "and push for Shannopins to-night. I know the land well."

"But thou must ride!" expostulated George. Shenandoah laughed.

"Oh, I'll give the dear old fellow a rest," she answered, glancing over her shoulder at the horse, which followed close at their heels, his nose at her elbow.

"I've ofttimes worried and puzzled," put in Gist, "how wonderful it was our little Shen could run and walk for almost a day together, and never give over. Must be her English blood. I hear they are great walkers."

"Scarcely to that extent," objected Washington, thinking with a smile of Constance's small shoes.

"But how came ye here, Princess?" queried Gist.

"Why, I had word from Venango that Jean was ill and calling for me. I left, of course, on the instant, and brought him through by a chance."

"Chance, say ye? Never died man in thy care, little-un. Thou hast the God-given knack of healing."

"Well, when your party passed through Venango I was absent with a shooting-party; but when I returned I happened to get wind of a plan to bring back certain white scalps as trophies. I was interested, of course, but when I heard who these scalps then adorned I set off at once. There was no one I could trust, and besides I am long overdue at the Temple.

Washington said nothing, but his heart was nigh bursting with pleasure that she should take so much care whether he lived or died.

"Comrade," said Esther, putting a hand on Gist's shoulder, "for all our sakes, take a ride on Adjidaimo. We are young and fresh yet, but thou art giving out."

Now nothing would have induced Gist to accept this offer save a fascinating and romantic thought which came into his mind at the moment she spoke. Far be it from him to interfere with a pair of lovers, and he scrambled up wearily to Adjidaimo's back. Left alone the two were silent; only the sound of their scrunching steps on the snow could be heard.

As he walked a sudden idea made Washington grow cold all over, and then painfully warm with a rush. Jean Ardean, a French name—was *that* why she was for the claims of France on the frontier? Goaded on by this terrible thought, he threw timidity to the winds and asked blunderingly:

"Mistress Esther, is—is—Monsieur Jean very dear to thee?" Then overcome by the fear that she would think him rudely inquisitive, he stopped in despair. Was ever woman critical of the way a man showed his jealousy!

"Why, Mr. Washington?" parried Esther, laughing. Had she answered directly in the affirmative she could not have more firmly convinced Washington that she was betrothed to

Ardean. Brought up amongst the outer world conventions, he did not look upon a ride of some hundreds of miles, followed by a close attendance of weeks, as an ordinary service. Neither did he know Esther well enough to surmise that she would have done the same for any fellow-mortal—friend or foe—were he in dire need.

"'Twas naught, pardon for the question," and Washington launched madly into trivialities.

When they came to the Allegheny they were disappointed to find that the ice was in drifting cakes and did not form a bridge.

It took all day to construct a raft, but Esther was a guardian angel to them—finding wild meat, cooking maize cakes and petting them generally, in a way that made Washington thoroughly miserable and supremely happy in one.

And *"he"* was a Frenchman! Oh, how could she? thought George wretchedly.

At sundown they essayed to cross on the half-finished raft, Adjidaimo swimming. About mid-stream they stuck, jammed in the floating ice, but the great horse floundered across in noble style. Washington looked at Esther and grew very white. In his sudden fear for her he drove his pole to the bottom, and with all his strength strove to stay the raft till the ice had passed;

but the violence of the current-driven blocks jerked him into midstream. Esther cried out wildly, and lying down on the logs gave him a hand, calling at the same time to Kratrim, who plunged in; and with the aid of this powerful brute George was towed to a place of safety.

Any one more conceited than Washington would have noted her fright on his account, and other things she did for him; but with boyish despair he resigned himself to the "crushing hand of cruel fate." She was betrothed to *Jean Ardean!*

# CHAPTER XII

## 1754

*"Oh purblind race of miserable men,*
*How many among us at this very hour*
*Do forge a lifelong trouble for themselves,*
*By taking true for false and false for true."*
*—Tennyson.*

Washington—elbows on knees—sat looking over his little camp. He was depressed and disappointed. The assemblies of Pennsylvania and Maryland had not responded to his request for military funds; and as for Captain Trent's men, he was obliged to discharge them.

Besides these, there was another thought that crept aching into his heart. When would she be married? and where? He constantly tortured himself with surmises as to how dearly she loved this strange Frenchman.

At George's feet lay Dr. Craik, warm friend and associate. Nearby a great negro was shoeing horses, surrounded by a group of leathern-clad trappers, and two or three lean dogs, which were taking advantage of his fire, for the day was murky. Not far off lay three or four young fellows, dead to the world, their heads pillowed on their saddles, their guns stacked.

The main body of the camp, however, was more active. Some played at quoits, others ran about in contests of leaping or racing, occasionally wrestling.

This expedition of Washington against the French was fraught with the most trying difficulties and obstacles of every sort. Struggling over the mountains they were a handful of new soldiers in a wild country, opposing a far better disciplined foe. Trained veterans had the French, lying in readiness, and yet these raw young troops, inferior in number, fatigued with travel, must take the offensive.

Writing one day, near the banks of the Youghiogheny River, Washington was surprised to find Loyd standing near him.

"Compliments, Colonel. Have ye room for a voluntary offering?" quoth the jovial Latimer, holding out his hand. Washington took the proffered palm, looking a little mystified. He had always liked this loose-jointed, frank fellow, but had been rather nettled by his banter and seeming antagonism. It was good to see some one from the Temple, however, and some one, too, who had a clear, cheerful voice and a cordial manner.

"Of course thou art marvelous puzzled to see

me here, giving ye valuable presents gratis. Well, after thou hast taken my real name, date of christening, size of hat-band, and the number of my cell, I will turn to personalities."

"All that is scarcely necessary," said Washington, smiling. "I will make you one of my aides, and meantime let us talk."

"Exactly. George, my dear child, thou art a man of mind. I came precisely one hundred and fifty-six miles to talk to thyself."

"You do me great honor."

"Not at all. I should have come if thou hadst been Lieutenant Frazier yonder, provided there was to be any blood splashing. Gad, sir! Virginia is a tame old place for a man who revels in gore. But seriously," and Loyd leaned over with a confidential air, "I came to say I was mistaken about a few things, and willing to serve under ye after all."

"If you mean that—" and Washington paused, digging his heel into the sod.

"Aye, that I do. A man's heart is his ruler, when he has it out somewhere. I used to think ye were—but that's passed and over. Why speak of it at all?" and he once more held out his hand.

"It's true then?" asked George, awaiting the

reply eagerly, hope and conviction tugging at him.

"What in particular?"

"That she is betrothed to Jean Ardean." At that moment they were interrupted by Dr. Craik.

"Here's news, George! La Force has been seen skulking about with four troopers in tow. Gist got wind of him on the other side of Laurel Hill. He swore he was looking for deserters. Stuff and rot!"

"Oh, well," said Washington gloomily, " 'tis a losing game, James."

"Cheer up," said Loyd sympathetically. "The old King of Sparta swore a city was well fortified with a wall of men, and every man a brick—something like that."

"That's just it," went on George. "What can they expect of the poor fellows when they won't even give the few men we have funds? And to think that the regular recruits should receive more pay than we who are slaving along through the woods, mountains, and rocks. I would rather toil like a day laborer than serve on these terms!" and he paced back and forth, fuming.

"Oh, sit down, George, sit down! and take it out on paper. Don't talk to us about it; you'll

explode, or something," said Dr. Craik, winking at Loyd, for whom he had an instant liking.

It was some days before Colonel Washington could get Loyd alone again. When he finally did he once more sought to find the truth from this new friend.

"Well, Washtub," said Latimer, "fact is—"

But he was stopped by the arrival of an Indian messenger, who came with momentous tidings from the Half-King, a friendly chief encamped in the neighborhood.

In less than an hour Washington, with forty men, was on his way to join this Indian ally.

It was a frightful night—rain, deep mire, and utter darkness. The object of the expedition was to surprise La Force, who was lying several miles distant with about fifty fighting men under the command of one Jumonville.

Somehow George grew to listen for Loyd's hearty laugh, as they splashed, single file, through mud and bog. There was a buoyancy about this "Good old slats"—so Latimer was called in camp—that appealed to the reserved, half-diffident Washington.

Next morning, dashing into the hostile camp, an incident occurred which bound the two together for all time. The plan of attack threw

Washington's division in advance. Loyd, who had never before been in action and was wild with excitement, charged further than the rest, and grappling with a gigantic Indian rolled over and over, into the thick of the fight. The warrior, getting the upper hand, seized Loyd by the hair, and in another moment would have procured that youth's scalp had not a knock on the head from Washington interfered with this noble ambition.

"Whew! that was a close shave from a haircut," laughed the irrepressible Loyd; but the action was never forgotten, for all his joking.

The Virginians took twenty-one prisoners, and were greatly encouraged. Perhaps this initial success made the end of the campaign harder for their young leader to bear.

More trying to this earnest boy-officer than anything else was the camp at the Little Meadows. Half-King had brought with him the wives and children of his tribe, and the soldiery lost no time in paying attention to these slender maidens of the forest. Fond of the women was George,—no man dare deny it,—but Indian women—was it a credit to Virginia?

The responsibility of this refractory troop of mixed nations—English, Scotch, and Indian—

weighed and undoubtedly palled on their colonel.

Not the least of the troubles that beset him was the behavior of Captain Mackay with his South Carolina troops. These refused to work, swearing at the honest Virginians, who considered the building of forts and dragging of cannons part of warfare.

It was George's custom to conduct prayers morning and evening. With his fair head uncovered he would launch forth into an eager supplication. The rude huntsmen and Virginia boys bowed their heads together, and the minds of all alike flew back to some time, some where, when a little boy had said something like that to a mother, many, many miles across the rugged wilderness.

"Wash bucket," said Latimer one day, "thou shouldst have been a preacher. When I listen to thee saying, 'Bless thee, my children,' or something like that, I get little thrills up and down my spine. But hark ye, George, there is a prayer, I don't remember it exactly. It's been some time since I've indulged." Loyd paused. Gist, sitting by, shifted uneasily. He had seen the boy when his mother died.

"It began like this," went on Latimer in an altered tone, "Now I lay me— Eh, what?" for there was a sort of murmur from all sides.

"Yes, George, say that one this even," said Gist, a little sheepishly, pulling at Washington's coat. And he did. All around the motley circle men fell to hiding their faces, only to show their reverence of course. No soldier would shed a tear, even if he had never been away from the soft four-poster on the home plantation; or mayhap if he had a couple of kids a long ways off, saying that same little prayer with his name in it. Nevertheless, some of the coarsest hunters were blinking when the boyish voice had ended, and everybody was afraid to look at everybody else. When they did they all began to laugh somehow, and as George slipped off for a stroll he heard a trooper say gruffly:

"I reckon ye needn't to mind concerning that two pounds, Ray. I ken make 'thout it; I ain't got kids like ye be."

Washington stood looking dreamily before him until he heard something stir in a pile of leaves near by.

"Who goes there?" he cried out, abruptly realizing he was not at Bellevue or Mount Vernon.

A short laugh, silver sweet, came to him through the gloaming.

"Bright Lightning, Mr. Washington."

The voice was so like Esther's that he flushed with pleasure, but next moment grew stern. What did she about the camp? Mayhap one of the French prisoners had been—but no, that was not like her.

"And who may that be?" he demanded.

"Half-King's daughter," she replied.

He went closer, and even in the faint light saw she was not Esther; still there was something oddly familiar in the outline. Could it be Isabelle's face it was like? Yes, that was it; she had some Indian taint in her.

He did not care to be seen with this comely bronze maiden, so he turned to go. Then with a touch of curiosity he asked:

"How came you by your English?"

"As ye came by thy love, sir," she answered, twisting her lithe form until she could see his face.

"Savage!" he cried hotly, "prate not of what you know nothing!" Then remembering he was speaking to a woman, even though an Indian, he added wearily, "I have no love, nor wish one."

"Ah, they are all alike, these men. What read ye in the Bible this very even, 'Ere the cock crows, thou shalt deny me thrice.' "

Washington, who was turning away, paused in absolute wonder.

"Who taught you to say that?" he asked.

"Who taught me everything I know? Shenandoah—the Indian's sister, the white man's angel."

George sat down. He had not realized how heart-hungry he was. She laughed; an odd little, bitter thing, that laugh of hers, with the cynicism of experience which had been trust.

"Oh, thou wouldst know what she hath said of thee" she half mocked, "but she hath said naught. Only Nunanawbiegs hath spoken of thee; but I believe her not. Thou hast a face like the Great Spirit. Well have the Indians named thee Conicolamcarius, and thou art like her, like my white sister. Thou wilt never do her harm. You are like two red roses. Where the Great Father wills there ye will grow. If together, until death; if apart pure. Yet," she added musingly, " 'Waterspirit' died weeping for her, cursing thee."

The night of the surrender by the little band, the night of rain and humiliation, Loyd sought out Washington.

"George, old fellow," said he, gripping the other by the arm, "I came out here with the idea

that thou wast out of the game touching the little girl. I began to like ye then,—like ye hard,—and when I found that I was wrong, that thou hadst only stepped out thinking she had chosen, I couldn't take back my like. But what I did do was a sneaking shame. I have lain awake every night trying to make myself tell thee. Shen is not betrothed, never has been, and Jean Ardean is the last man on earth whom she would ever notice. That's not all, either. She— Oh, deuce take it, man, can't ye see for thyself, she takes to thee?"

Out of the fullness of his heart Washington had found it easy to sympathize.

"Cheer up, Loyd, do cheer up," he urged. "Perhaps you will win her in the end. She cares not a straw for me, and you are the best of them all. I hope you are the one if I am displaced." But a thousand little voices were singing in his ears a very different story.

The march homeward was melancholy and wretched. The troops were disheartened, vanquished and morbid, thinking over friends and brothers who had been left behind to no purpose, and hampered by the wounded they had brought with them. Worst of material discomforts, they were short of food. They made their colonel's life a trying one, and he yearned to hear

Esther's voice, full of sympathetic interest, saying he had done the best he could, at least.

"Ah, Papion, thou knowest nothing of my longing to see thee, if thou protest of risks. *Sacre bleu!* What care I if I am in Washington's line of retreat. Who will ever teach thee the power of love, Cherie? Do not draw away, Papion. Wouldst not rather be near to me?" Jean caught Esther's hand in both of his, and would have pulled her to him had he not heard the pounding of hoofs without.

Esther flew to the door of the drawing-room and called to the three officers who stood talking by the fire.

"Oh, quickly," she panted. "Jean, as soon as they are in here do thou go upstairs by the other way and wait in thy room."

She had only just closed them in, when Washington passed through the hall and stood hesitating on the opposite threshold.

"Mistress Denis," he began, and stopped.

Esther's heart was thumping wildly, but it did not once occur to her to sacrifice her guests. Jean's words of the inn were ringing in her brain—"The bond 'twixt guest and host is stronger than ties of blood."

"Pardon, Mistress Esther, but are you alone?"

"My grandfather is laid abed with gout, and Isabelle is taking her turn at tending him. There is no one with me."

"Ah, I am glad. I had thought I heard voices. Reynold and Jack or Don are not here, are they?"

"Oh, no, no. They are not here," she assured him, with such eagerness that it would have made a babe suspicious. She was patently new to deception.

A troubled look came into George's blue eyes. He glanced toward the dining-room. Never did he remember having seen it closed; indeed, it struck him so odd that he mentioned it, hoping to dispel the electrical sense of uncomfortable excitement which seemed in the air.

"Oh, why, that? Yes, we, I mean—I—" stammered Esther, and was silent.

What could she be seeking to conceal?

He looked at her more keenly and saw she was in an agony of embarrassment.

"Well," he said quietly but with interest.

"Why dost not go in, sir? Thou takest so much interest." She made a pathetic attempt at banter in the remark, but it was miserably transparent.

"Thank you," said Washington coolly, "I think I shall." He stepped toward the door. A demon of jealousy had made him think of Jean—Jean who was a Frenchman, his hated conqueror.

Suddenly Mistress Esther sat down, and leaning against the disputed portal, burst into tears. Frenchman, rivals, spies,—nay, England and the militia,—vanished from George's mind, and he was beside her on the floor, his arms about her, his sympathy giving him boldness as would no other thing.

Touching her went to his head, and as she rested against his shoulder his face brushed hers. Esther had stopped crying. It was as if a curtain had raised and she had stepped into her own. She had found herself, and more—him. As his lips closed over hers she felt that her heart and soul were slipping into his in a sort of blinding oneness that must be always.

It is impossible to tell how long they would have sat so had not Isabelle interrupted them. There was that in Clochette's face when she entered which frightened Esther. But Washington did not see it. He had eyes for one thing only now. The riotous behavior of his heart, which had made a most energetic effort to spring out of him, had been lulled by an overwhelming

sense of his new holding. This love he had yearned and chaffed so long to win was his, all his.

Not until they had said good-night did Esther remember her other guests. She sat still a long while, thinking. Would it be best to let them rest where they were until morning? No, a light would be apt to reveal some trace. George would be sure to discover them, and he had with him seven troopers, who were sleeping in an outhouse within easy summons.

When she had finally decided upon a plan she slipped off shoes and dress, and pulling on a thin coat, lighted a taper and stole down the hallway to Jean's door. Knocking cautiously, she held the candle for them to pass downstairs. At the outer entrance Jean caught her hand.

"Thank thee, Cherie," he half whispered, "'twas cleverly managed; and—" dropping his voice still more—"one kiss, Papion, ere I go." He bent over her.

"I am sorry to interrupt, Monsieur, but I shall have to trouble you for your sword." Washington's tones were harsh and even. Jean wheeled and drew, but found seven pistols pointed variously at himself and his three companions.

"Est—bien!" he said, shrugging his shapely shoulders. "Cela m'est egal." Then, as a new

thought came to his mind, he turned on Esther. "So this is thy little coup-de-main? Bien fait. Well done," he sneered.

But another interruption prevented George from hearing this last. Isabelle ran from the stairway, where she had been crouching, and fairly flew at Washington.

"Thou art playing false, false, false!" she half screamed. "Jean was to go free if I told."

"Child," returned Washington gravely, "I promised you nothing, nor even answered what you said. 'Tis not my pleasure to take Monsieur Ardean—I owe it to my country." Then with a half smile, "It has ever been my wont to oblige the ladies, and where two are so interested I should let him go if I could. Private Smith, see that these prisoners are taken back to camp and brought on in due time. I shall be journeying post haste to Williamsburg to make report. Mistress Denis, my compliments," and he was gone.

Esther was half dazed. This new joy, but a few hours old, which had been singing in her, was dead; and with it every wish, desire and hope. Clochette, too, stood still for a while.

"Oh, what must ye think of me! I, whom ye saved from misery, taught, dressed, fed and loved. I have tricked and betrayed ye. Ah, but

I was half crazed when I saw you two together. Oh, why did I do it! Why did I do it!" and throwing herself at Esther's feet she clasped her benefactor's ankles, and with all the eloquence of the French and Iroquois blood sobbed out prayers and explanations.

Esther quietly disentangled herself and half ran upstairs to be alone. She cared not for Clochette and all her penitence. One thing only beat at her brain—he was gone, he was gone.

# CHAPTER XIII

## 1755.

*"And such a yell was there,*
*Of sudden and portentous birth,*
*As if men fought upon the earth,*
*And friends in upper air."*

—*Scott.*

They were weary, heartsick days for Esther, the days which followed the campaign of '54. In vain did Loyd linger after the others had gone, and strive to make her leave him with her old look of lasting happiness. He knew, with the intuition of a lover, that she only waited his going to curl up in the deerskin chair by the fire and grieve; or when the restless sense of desertion would come upon her, walk hurriedly about the room.

When the spring came again it was yet harder; for the perfume of the drawing-room flowers at eventide brought back the scene which had passed—forever, she thought—out of her life.

It was a morning in May, a morning of bursting buds and expanding life. Esther stood among her roses, her arms full to overflowing, a wreath of Loyd's making clinging to her curly

head. Her gown was the pale blue, dear to her now, in which she had first met Washington. She looked unreal to Lord Fairfax as he entered the garden, so artistic and dreamy-eyed was she.

"I hear thou art not feeling thy own gay self," he said, taking her gently by the hand.

She smiled rather indifferently.

"No," she rejoined, a little wearily.

"Ah, I see," he murmured, shaking his gray locks. "'Tis an affair of the heart. I know the signs well."

"Thou, my Lord?" exclaimed Esther wonderingly. "Hast ever—" but she checked herself; for Sir Thomas had sat suddenly down, looking much older and grayer than she had ever seen him. It flashed through her mind that in her tacit acquiescence he had read the answer to his long-delayed proposal, and she felt very heartless and unkind.

For want of anything better to say she cried out:

"Do tell me, what ails thee, Lord Fairfax?"

"That have I told no one, save George, for 'twas to her discredit; but all the world knew it. Gad! I will tell thee. Mayhap it may save some poor wretch. Look ye. Once I was a strapping young officer, a member of the blues, a writer for the *Spectator,* a titled nobleman of

wealth. These eyes were not this watery blue nor my nose so beaklike. I loved, aye loved, as boys do. We plighted troth, and sealed it by many an earnest kiss and sacred confidence; but in the end, to be a duchess seemed more alluring. Ah, such perfidy, to sell, not what was hers,—that were matter of another color,—but what was mine, mine—"

Esther laid a sympathetic hand on his, and so they sat,—guileless both,—each thinking of the cruelty and wickedness of this fair English belle, who doubtless never dreamed that Lord Fairfax would care any more than a score of other young beaux who had whispered, sworn, and been quite content to pass to the next when their dismissal came. And so he had told this to George!

"What are you children whispering about in here? Holding hands! Tut tut! Real devils, you two!" and pressing the old man's arm affectionately, Loyd sat unblushingly down between them. Lord Fairfax liked Loyd, but catching sight of Sir Denis, trotting toward the stables, excused himself and left them.

"Marry him, Shen, marry him! and set him in a draft," said Latimer, putting his head on Esther's lap and smiling contentedly up at her.

She fell to rumpling his mass of brown hair with listless fingers.

"Tell me, sweetheart, is this good news or bad? There is a very dictatorial, egotistical, long-nosed, curly-wigged general in the British Army, who rejoices in the awe-inspiring name of Braddock. Not a bad-looking youngster, faith, who—"

"In Heaven's name, Loy," said Esther nervously, "do get to thy point."

"*Well,* since thou wilt take it straight, *he's* coming."

"Here? Well, art going to join him?"

"I? Oh yes, I shall, and try to get killed. Who cares, *who cares?* I'd better be dead. Nay, I *want* to be dead. Please don't laugh. I do. I only wish I had a chance to be right now. I'd show thee."

"Now, Loy," protested Esther, who knew he was half in earnest, "thou knowest that I should care awfully, and there's Kratrim, and—"

"Hang it, Shen, thou shouldest be an actress lady. But this is not what I came to tell thee. Braddock isn't anybody; *George* is coming."

"I am sure I cannot imagine what made thee dream for one moment that Mr. Washington's coming or going made the very slightest little dif-

ference to *me!*" So Mistress Shen, and snatching up her roses she fled into the house.

Braddock's march to the West was fraught with delay partly due to the failure of provincial contractors who failed to fulfil their agreements, and partly to the general's set rule of warfare—his "system," which had been acquired in civilized England, and to which he held tenaciously, despite its folly for frontier fighting.

In vain Washington, who saw from former experience that Braddock's tactics were ruinous, would hint and remark, even suggest, improvements. As far as Fort Cumberland the General traveled in state, with his own chariot, surrounded by his troops of horse, guns saluting his arrival, and all the other troublesome and useless forms of the service.

There were several of America's staunch defenders who took their schooling in this miniature war—Captain Horatio Gates, Hugh Mercer, and Washington himself, whose immediate companions were Dr. Craik, young Roger Morris, and Orme.

When the troops passed the Temple within about six miles Washington was possessed with a mad longing to turn into the familiar trail, and dash up and claim his own. But the thought

of Esther's supposed treachery drove him back to his tent, and constant fretting.

Loyd could not understand him, and was rather afraid to speak of him to Esther. What he did say, however, when he procured a few hours' leave and repaired to Esther's garden, was that Braddock was a stiff-necked puppet and that he would be ambuscaded and cut to pieces as soon as he passed the Monongahela.

"Gad, Shen, ye should hear old Beat-the-drums spatting with—eh—with one of his aides. Nobody can aid *him*."

" 'Sir,' he will say, 'these savages may be indeed terrible to a handful of raw militia, but will make no more impression upon the King's regulars than so many boys with slings. Bah!' sputters he in disgust, 'is it a way for gentlemen to fight, beating about in the bushes? Pooh! that is all very well for dogs and Indians, but *we* will stand in the open air, sir!'

" ' "Fight the Devil with fire," quoth I.

" 'Silence, sir! Who gave you permission to beard your superior officer!'

"And so he goes. He will come to a sad end. I'm sorry for him; but, Shen, 'twixt thee and myself, George is not well. I don't suppose ye care at all,—of course I know thou dost not,—

but I like old Wash, and he is not going to see this march through."

Esther said no word, but held very tight to the rustic seat.

"What ails him?" she asked at length in a trembling tone, which she honestly believed to be the most indifferent and casual in the world.

"Why, fever; the kind ye brought Jean out of a while agone, with that marvelous remedy ye found out thyself." Esther's frightened look touched him. "I hate to bother ye this way, little girl, but fact is, I want a helping hand. 'Tis no idle pleasantry what I said about the ambuscade. We will be surprised and wiped out some of these days. If thou wilt believe it, we have not a scout to beat the woods. Gouverneur Morris has made a very sensible suggestion, that they get Captain Jack; but the old dog would not come. Says he won't put up with the rules and fussy regulations. If he would join us and bring his band— Where art going?" for Esther had run toward the house.

"I will be with thee in the instant," called she over her shoulder.

So Captain Jack and his followers came in to General Braddock's camp at the Little Mead-

ows. George was overjoyed, and at once hastened to report this welcome arrival.

"Who are these mighty men, George, that you seem so 'deuced' glad to see them?"

"A man such as we wish, General. A skilled woodsman, who hates the Indians with all the wild loathing of one who has had his entire family murdered by them. His sole aim in life is to kill a red man, and protect from them the few white families he can. He is a famous brush fighter and scout."

"Hm!" sniffed Braddock. "Very fine, George, very fine; but I doubt whether it is not beneath his Majesty to take such vagrants into the service. Why," raising the tent flap to peer out, "they are little better than Indians themselves. But," seeing Washington's surprise and disappointed look, "I will consider it. Tell him he may come in."

Leaning on his rifle, the "Black Hunter," with the condescension of achievement and prowess, told the General the merits of the little troop without; asking nothing but an opportunity to fight in their own way.

Braddock was angered at the superior manner of this frontiersman, and rejoined coolly:

"Well, there's time enough, my good fellow. I may employ you possibly; but I have ex-

perienced troops, in whom I place absolute confidence."

"Black Hunter" turned his broad back upon the haughty Englishman, then stalking from the tent, shook hands with George, and with the other frontiersmen marched quitely back to the woods.

As the last man of the sturdy file passed from sight, Loyd looked at George with mutual understanding.

"Game's up, Colonel," said he, and went off to clean his gun.

The fever which Latimer had foreseen began to show in Washington's flushed cheeks and increased restlessness, then severe headaches. Finally, Loyd insisted upon taking possession of the wagon from the rear and stowing the invalid therein.

Then it was that, one hot, heavy-aired night, George, tossing in semi-delirium, told the real cause of his illness. The "little lurking secret of the blood—rankling keen—that makes the heart its food."

It was Loyd who persuaded Braddock to insist that Washington remain some days in the rear, with a guard and Dr. Craik, awaiting the coming of Dunbar's detachment which was marching about two days' travel from them.

It took a great deal of persuasion and commanding to make the young aide consent. Orme promised to write back dispatches of all that occurred, and the General swore faithfully that George should be with the main division by the time action was meditated. Morris promised to ride over and see him off and on. Notwithstanding, he was left still chaffing at his confinement.

It was one of those June days when the shadows lie vividly on the thick grass, and the air is rife with perfume and glorious languid stillness.

Young Roger Morris, spurring his horse along the jagged new-cut road from the camp to his friend's halting place, was stopped by an interesting as well as a picturesque sight. High in the branches of a gnarled old tree a slender boy was bleating precisely like a fawn in distress. Indeed, the sound was so life-like that Roger looked about to find the little animal, but saw only a doe with wide, troubled eyes answering the call. All heedless of her own danger, she approached under the overhanging limb. As soon as she stood directly beneath, a coiled rope dropped over her neck, and she was securely tied while the boy calmly milked her. Captain Mor-

ris watched with wonder and amusement while the lad set her again at liberty, and picking up the small bit of wood which had been used for a "bleat," turned with the frankest of smiles and asked if he were bound for Mr. Washington's tent.

"That I am, and right pleased to see he has so resourceful a nurse," observed Roger. There was that about this boy which attracted him oddly. "May I ask whom—"

"Shenandoah Denis," answered the other, smiling in a way that made Roger feel laughed at for some unknown reason.

They talked much by the way, and before they reached the Youghiogheny, where Washington was stationed, they were the oldest of friends.

"Jove! that's a noble brute!" cried Morris, as Adjidaimo let out a long whinny and curveted around in a circle, much as a dog might have welcomed Esther.

"Yes, he's a good beast," agreed Shenandoah, blushing with pleasure. "He's mine."

"What wilt take for him?"

"Nothing in this world."

By this time they had reached Loyd and George, who were engaged in the deep occupation of making a catscradle.

"Washboiler, thou art a clumsy-fingered

knave," declared Latimer, loudly, having mixed the strings—despite Washington's efforts—in a most hopeless manner.

"Ho! what have we here, milk?" called Don, who had ridden from the Temple with Esther. "What did I tell ye about deer coming from their fawns and spraying milk and all that, eh, George?"

" 'Tis indeed so," admitted the now convalescing youth, looking something more than gratitude into Esther's eyes as she bent over him.

"Odds life, 'tis a woman!" cried Roger.

"George, thy eyes are tell-tales, I'll be bound," reproved Loyd. "Thou shouldst look at the milk, not at the milkmaid. Bah! lovers are foolish things, I swear. It makes a man a silly ass! Now I—"

"Wast just born so," put in Don.

"Hang thee— Hello, behold yonder couple!" For Esther had run along the bank to take some fish from Anthony, who had been some hours catching them, and Roger had followed. Indeed, it was very plain that dashing Roger Morris did not look upon George as a too formidable rival, and was vastly smitten on the instant.

"I never could catch fish," complained Loyd,

when the finny newcomers were sizzling on dogwood stakes by a fire of logs.

"Fact is, ye can't catch fish and talk, Loyd," observed Don, preparing to skin a buck he had shot that morning.

It was nearing ten o'clock on the morning of the fatal ninth of June, 1755. Washington and Morris sat in their saddles, watching the gay little army crossing the ford of the Monongahela. The drums beat lustily, together with the play of the fifes, and the colors waved showily in the sunlight.

"Ah, George, that is *something* compared with your militia!" exclaimed Morris enthusiastically.

"Ah, 'tis a goodly sight; but—" his face clouding abruptly—" 'tis more fitting for St. James's Park than for a hostile wilderness. We are fighting, as Loyd says, with devils, not soldiers of honor. You have never seen an Indian scalp a child, Roger, or thou wouldst not shoot them. Burning is a good fate for some, and yet there are those who have their points. Esther tells me that Keneu has gone among the enemy's Indian allies and, dressed as a medicine man, has thoroughly convinced them I am a veritable God, and that if I am stricken by one of them the

whole tribe will be swept away. I scarcely think that will count much, however, against the prize of a perfectly good scalp."

"Ah, it is well to have such a circumspect sweetheart. Think you she returned to the Temple?"

"I would that I knew where she was," answered Washington, his face troubled. "She promised me a signal did she hear of danger to me. She herself is safe from all Indians alike."

"Look at yon thicket!" cried Morris.

As he spoke an Indian broke through the brush. He was mounted on a fine animal,—not Adjidaimo, surely, but a familiar horse, nevertheless,—and as the savage held up a branch in token of amity, showing at the same time that he bore no weapons, the two aides galloped down the slope and forded, meeting him on the other bank.

It was Shaw Shaw, the young brave who had conducted Esther and George to the mighty Shagriss that day of sunshine seven years before. The Indian dismounted, giving Washington a case of deerskin, and George seemed to hear a fair maiden saying with a laugh and a blush, "To tell truth, I like having it myself—not that I am superstitious at all."

"Canst understand English?" asked Washington.

The warrior nodded.

"Well, then, tell Shenandoah that *now* I shall 'die singing.'"

The warning had arrived at the moment of disaster, for as Washington joined Braddock the sound of sudden firing came from the advance body. Loyd was some hundred yards away, but he looked for George and waved a hand.

"Damme, George, I believe your ambuscade has come," said the General. "Now we'll give them a bit of regular fighting. Colonel Burton, go to the front with eight hundred of the vanguard, and post the other four hundred with the baggage. Gad, sir, what's that?"

"That," replied Washington, smiling despite his consternation, "is the warwhoop of an American Indian, and as near to the song of Satan as you will ever hear on earth."

"I' faith, it hath a truly venomous sound. Orme, haste you to the fore and bring me word of how the skirmish goes."

But Braddock did not wait for an account. With all his faults, the stiff-necked old General was brave to the point of rashness, and he lost no time in going to the point of danger.

There all was frightful confusion and pitiful

carnage. The death-dealing fire of lead seemed to come from nowhere, everywhere, anywhere.

In vain, Gage shouted orders. The soldiers were panic-stricken by this horrible slaughter, and, above all, the hideous yells which broke with appalling clamor from rocks and unseen places. Men fired at random, or puffs of smoke, killing their own comrades. The advance fell in bloody heaps, a horrible struggling mass of mangled bodies, mingling their yells of agony with the screams of the wounded horses, the dread reports of rifles, and the diabolic whoops of triumph everywhere filling the air as the Indians by chance secured some luckless scalp.

As Colonel Burton's reinforcement came up, the terrified remnants of Gage's men dashed back among them, producing terrible chaos. Braddock threw himself into the ranks, commanding the soldiers to form into small squads, and advance; but their officers could do nothing with them.

Lloyd gathered together enough Virginians to form a small party, and dashing into the woods gave the Indians a little of their own handling; picking them off from under cover.

Even in this moment of excitement and peril the proud old British general said to Washington:

"They would fight, they *would* fight, if they could see the enemy, but it is useless to fire at trees and bushes, and they can not stand and be shot down by an invisible foe."

"For God's sake, General, let them follow Latimer into the woods and fight that way!" shouted George.

"No, no!" vociferated the General; and as the few who still had their heads about them attempted to follow George's advice, Braddock stormed at them, striking them angrily back with his sword.

The heroism of the officers was splendid, dashing about, sometimes in groups, but oftener alone in a wild attempt to regain the cannon and spur on the men. Poor, brave fellows, forgetting their death which was assured by this betrayal of command, for the Indians were eagerly aiming at the leaders.

Orme and Morris both being put down early in the fight, Washington found himself sole active aide to carry the orders about the field. As he moved before the raking fire he found that what bullets reached him came from French rifles. The Indians aimed elsewhere. His coat was more than once pierced, however, and two horses sank under him. He dashed frantically up to the paralyzed artillerymen, left leaderless

by Sir Peter Halket, who had fallen while leading a charge; but commands were of no avail there.

Washington dropped from his saddle, pointed a field-piece, and fired into the woods. But as the smoke cleared he saw to his dismay that Loyd, who had crept up closer to the French than his companions, had been shot down by a trooper who was firing wherever any smoke was to be seen. George ran to his friend, and found the wound was only in the leg, and that he was still shooting, though the freckles stood out against a very white face.

Washington gave him his flask, and half lifting him on a horse turned the beast's head to the ford, saying:

"Go back to Esther, old man; you have done your duty, and I may fall any moment."

"Braddock's down!" cried some one nearby, and looking, George saw the ill-fated commander in the arms of Captain Stewart. Running to the spot he heard the General cry:

"Leave me here! Let me die with my hopes, here, here!" But Stewart, with the help of the devoted servant Bishop, placed him in a litter, and bore him away.

Now was the day indeed lost. The Indians reveled in carnage and plunder. In fact, the

last saved from more murderous pursuit what few fugitives survived, for the wretches stopped to load themselves with booty and to take the blood-smeared coats off the slain, or tear away bright buttons which had rested but an hour before over many a gay heart, filled with ambition and hope.

And all through the terror of battle and the sad scenes which followed,—the death of Braddock, the humiliating retreat homeward,—the sacred feather lay close to Washington's heart.

## CHAPTER XIV

### 1756

*"Young Knight, whatever arms thou dost profess,*
*And through long labors toilest after fame,*
*Beware of fraud, beware of fickleness,*
*In choice and charge of thy dear loved dame,*
*Lest thou of her believe too light a blame,*
*And rash miss-weaning doe thy heart remove.*
*For unto Knight there is no greater shame,*
*Than lightness or inconstancy in love."*

*—Edmund Spenser*

Winter again at the dear old Temple. Loy, who had recently strained his leg by using it too soon after his wound, sat in the deerskin chair before the blaze, looking the picture of blissful content and utter satisfaction.

"You'll go to heaven for dat, shoah," he mimicked as Esther brought in a bowl of broth seasoned with all those mysterious leaves and sticks stowed away by the perfect housewife.

Sitting down before the fire she was preparing an ashcake,—Southerners all know what that is, and Northerners don't like them, anyway,—when a rousing knock, followed by the Blackridge boys, made Esther forget Loyd, cakes, and all; for these two old comrades had been abroad for four long years, studying at Oxford.

"Hello! hello! hurrah!" shouted Loyd.

"Well,"—as Ren and Jack both waved imposing rolls of sheepskin, much as a rooster flaps his wings,—"I see you've come home by degrees."

"Ah, Loy, Loy, next to the little woman, thou art the best of getting back," said Ren, sitting on one deer's head and hanging his legs over the other.

"And how art thou, and thy limb?" queried Jack, tilting on his brand-new English boots before the hearth, and pulling off his equally new English-made gauntlets, taking care to let his lace-trimmed hat fall to the floor.

"Oh, as well as could be expected," returned Loy, shying in his chair, eyes fixed in mock fear on the fallen chapeau.

"Damn thee for a foul-mouthed knave!" said Master Jack airily.

" 'You'll go to hell fo' dat, shoah!' Heaven! don't put thy foot in my dinner there. Aye, the ashcake. Shen! 'tis nigh done, I'm sure!"

"Shenden," quoth Reynold, putting his arm about her shoulders and drawing her to the window, "come let me look at thee. Gad! I have traveled far and wide, dined at Whites, lived at Covent Garden and Vauxhall, but never have I found a face like thine, little girl; nor such eyes, nor—"

"Oh, hold thy peace, Ren," interrupted Jack.

"What I would fain know is, art not going to choose one of us soon?"

"Why, she has," announced Loyd.

"Who?" cried both the young fellows at once.

"George Washington. Now who says I can't break a thing gently?"

It was indeed a hard blow to the two lovers, who had studied books and fashions for four weary years, hoping when they returned to dazzle a certain fair woodland maiden.

"You may be highly polished, you two, but you are just plain wood. He's gold, pure gold," declared Loyd between mouthfuls.

"Sir!" blustered Jack, angry with Latimer for the first time in his life, "I shall demand satisfaction for this when thou art recovered."

"Don't wait; I'm full of satisfaction right now," replied Loyd blandly.

Ren, who cared the most, was first to put a bright face on the matter.

"Well, then, our presents will be fine wedding-gifts; and, Shen, I have a letter from Connie—Mrs. Myers now.

"Dearest Shen-den (wrote Constance):

"I am at present in New York, stopping with Beverly Robinson's wife.

"A pretty stew the Colonies are in—Virginia and Maryland, that is. It seems a Captain Dagworthy, or Bragworthy, some silly name, who holds a commission from the King,—having served in Canada,—is at the head of thirty men who form Maryland's militia. Of course he is only a Provincial Colonel, but he insists upon the privileges of his old commission. I don't see how he can serve under two titles; but anyway thou knowest how it always rankles in Mr. Washington that those who hold commisions from the Crown should take precedence of those who receive theirs from the Governor.

"This Mr. Bragworthy gives himself great airs, taking the superiority of everything in his neighborhood; so Master Georgie ups and says he will *resign,* if he, *the Commander-in-Chief of the Virginia Forces,* is to be subjected to a Maryland captain of thirty men.

"What mixes it up worse is, that they can't even decide whether Fort Cumberland, where this Dagworthy gentleman is stationed, belongs to Maryland or Virginia.

"To decide these matters George is sent on a mission to Shirley, who has poor old

Braddock's place as General Commander of the Provinces. The object, to find out whether Shirley sides with George or Bragg, Virginia or Maryland. Nice little question for him to decide before breakfast.

"Well, what I have been leading up to is, that George arrived in the same mail as your letter telling of thy betrothal to him. My dear, art quite sure he means business? Of course his speaking to Sir Denis looks decided, but he is a man of temptations—both ways.

"My old friend George Mercer is here—the one who rode all those long miles with me, shut up in the coach. Lud, Lud, and his horse broke away, and I had to tell Madame F., 'why, *that* was the reason he got in'; and Captain Stewart is here too. But they do not look one whit as handsome as thy young Colonel.

"Law, Shen, didst say 'tis he trying to start Virginia's militia to wearing those rude gray hunting-shirts, like the Indians? Well, he is quite different here, wears gold and scarlet sword-knots, gold-lace hats, gold shoe-buckles, and his white silk stockings are far finer and more silky than

any other man's—but zounds! I forget *thou* art still a maid and therefore never look at men's legs. His riding is the talk of the town, and when he comes back from Boston, where Shirley is posted, there is to be a race in his honor. I never heard of racing in February, but the Robinsons are anxious to give him all possible entertainment, and he has some very fine horses. Then thou knowest what horsey people the Virginians are, and I have my suspicions that these Northerners are itching to show off some of their fine racing stock.

"But one thing I *just must tell thee,* though it hurt me in the doing—*that man is a flirt!*

"Beverly Robinson, who comes from Virginia, was an old school-mate of George's, and of course George came here first thing. Now, Beverly married an heiress of Adolphus Philipse's. A very rich man indeed—she hath a sister—and most important of all, co-heiress—a very pretty minx, and George *is* making love to her. I *know* because I—yes, I will tell thee just how. I hid in the drawing-room behind the screen and heard every word he said.

"She is a bold, brazen society flirt, Shen,

and depend upon it she will have him if she gets the chance."

"Loy," said Shen that night as they sat together in the drawing-room after the others had gone, Isabelle and Sir Denis having retired, "dost think thou art well enough to spare me for a while?"

Loyd raised his head and read her face by the firelight.

"Art going East, Shen?"

"Aye, I'm going East, Loy."

Ah, it's no use, little girl; no use, no use," he said, patting her sadly on the shoulder. "If he comes not, thou canst never bring him. It is odd, my Shenandoah, that thou, who canst drive most men with the thread of thy silken hair, hast bungled so with this one. Faith, I think 'tis because ye really care. Some men can stand loving, but not George. Give him plenty of crosses and sorrows to feed on, and he will love his heart out, fret himself sick with longing; but let him be sure that thou art madly enamoured with himself, and his love will die like a fish out of water.

"It must swim in tears, little heart. But thou wilt go. I know thou canst not help it. 'Tis human nature awake in thee at last.

"Law, Mr. Washington! you flatter so. Odds life, one wouldn't think you had passed your youth scalping Indians. Mayhap, some fair Delaware savage like Pocahontas hath taught you how to say sweet nothings."

"Miss Phi—" But Washington did not finish his sentence. Both he and Captain Morris exclaimed under their breath.

They were standing on a covered platform overlooking a smooth track round which the entries for a gentleman's race were slowly pacing.

The eyes of the two officers were directed to a splendid animal stepping daintily along the turf—nostrils wide, little white crescents showing in his shining eyes, neck curved, coat glistening and wonderful in color, chest broad, and quarters perfect. Champing his bit as gently as a cat purs, with tail-in-air he proudly led the line. There was intelligence in his expression that set some laughing, but those who had entries fell to cursing.

Though the beaux about her exclaimed at the beautiful mount, Mary Philipse in shrill tones remarked the rider. He sat his horse as though the brute were of stone, instead of ever-changing, very-much-alive flesh. And "Lud, such boots and breeches! the very latest! And his shirt, how well it becomes him!" Poor Ren,

he *had* good taste, and Jack's boots were small for him, anyway.

How Esther's curls, caught back in a solitaire, stole lights from the sun. *"Such* coloring!"

"The youth is a veritable Adonis, nay, Mercury," quoth Mistress Constance; and the innocent eyes she raised to meet George's astonished gaze partook of the expression we sometimes see upon infants.

"Dear me, I'm glad I begged and teased till Bevey had the race, despite the time of year, just in your honor, Mr. Washington, if it brings us another *love* like that; and after all, 'tis very mild for February."

"Like all queens, you speak in plural," remarked Captain Morris, still keeping his eyes on the horse and rider which were drawing so much applause.

"Oho," gurgled Miss Mary in an ecstasy of excitement, "they are going to start. Oh, look! There is Mr. Stewart, and my precious Bluebelle, and—Why, what is that handsome, strange man doing? He is getting off!"

A thunder of cheers rose as Esther, standing with tense hand on saddle, waited the starting signal, scorning to stay mounted as did the others. Then ignoring the stirrups, she sprang up and shot out like a shaft from the rest.

Never had Adjidaimo been so insulted. A spur had been touched to his side, a whip laid on his back. With the indignation of wounded pride he flew on and on, heedless of obstacles, over one artificial thicket after another. Indeed, they were nothing compared to the jagged chasms he had often cleared in the West. Bluebelle thundered hard on his flank.

Then came the long home-stretch, and the rough training of frontier life began to show for something. Suddenly Bluebelle crashed headlong over a ditch, throwing her rider some three feet in front of Adjidaimo. So quickly did Esther check her mount that both rolled in the dust, and the main body of horses swept on.

But the last heat was a mile in length. Esther was up and off again, amid frantic yells of "Bravo!" "That's the boy!" "Come on, Saladin!" "Come on, Bruce!"

"That youngster's losing pluckily, anyway," muttered Morris, and all within hearing noddingly agreed.

But they had not counted on the blood of wild unridden forefathers that leaped in Adjidaimo. Many a time had Esther and he tumbled down a hill and been up and off, after a flying buffalo. No longer was his tail in air—'twas straight, in

line with his leveled neck. He was a streak of glorious muscle and speed.

More inspiring than lash or spur was Esther's low "Run, boy, *run!*" which he had learned to understand and spring to all his life. As he gained on the others people began to cry "Adjidaimo" louder than ever; and all at once the crowd held its breath. The strange horse was neck to neck with Saladin, and running easy. Saladin's owner turned away.

"It's all up with old Sal, they're whipping him," he said, and the race was won by twenty paces, Esther coming in at a trot.

Jumping off, she laid her cheek against the fine strong neck, covered with lather and dust, and Adjidaimo appreciated it perfectly when she patted him hard and said brokenly, "Fine boy, my own chum," rubbing his wet face in a most disrespectful manner against her fine boots and breeches.

It was a sight which made old men smile with pleasure, and young girls straighten their bonnets, to see the slim victor come forward to take his prize (her prize) which was to be given by Miss Mary Philipse. Shen's head and shoulders were covered with dust, and a slight cut aslant the temple—which had bled to look worse —gave her an air of a hero returning from bat-

tle, and drew sighs, and "Oh, poor dear thing," from all the ladies.

Now as the fair Mary descended from the platform to give the prize awarded, Esther stepped back, and waving a hand at Adjidaimo, who had followed close behind his owner, said gallantly:

"Ah, Madame, *there* is where honor is due; and as a man I am unworthy to receive reward from so fair a hand."

"Very fulsome and foolish," said the young macaronis; but Mistress Mary thought the speech a "monstrous fine one," and swept a curtsy which even Esther admired, and involuntarily started to emulate; but catching sight of Connie's agonized face above, remembered, and made a bow worthy of a Chesterfield.

That night as Esther passed on her way to the dance, along the corridor which led through the Robinsons' house, she paused a moment to gaze at the goodly reflection in the mirror near the stairs. Look, some of you, for the picture of the adored Major André, and you will find a face much the same, save for her bent eyebrows. The high, lace-frilled stock became her mightily, and Jack's imported coat gave her a breadth truly mannish. The coat itself was a

wonderful affair, all braiding and buttons, and it was looped back from the front to show the rich white lining. The outside was of pale blue satin. The long Charles the Second vest, of white satin, was heavily overlaid with gold patterns, and the white powdered wig curled closely above her flushed face. Knee breeches of pale blue ended in diamond buckles matching those on the pumps. White silk stockings and fine lace at wrist and throat completed a rare picture. Connie came upon her and made sport of her vanity, calling her "A dear conceited minx" so loudly that one of the slaves overheard and told the gossips of the kitchen—"Deed, 'twar scangulous, de way Missis Myers do take on wid dat Mars Latimer"; for there were colored slaves in New York in those days who had been far worse treated than those in the South during the supposed negro plot of 1741.

"Don't forget the drawing-room at twelve," whispered Connie as they passed down the stairs. "Of course he will be wild to lecture me about you, and I'll keep him there if I have to sit on him."

Mistress Mary was not the only one who lost her heart to the slender newcomer. This Loyd Latimer, so called, who had arrived from out West somewhere, endorsed by Mrs. Myers,—

such a close friend of the Beverly Robinsons,—for Latimer (the second) seemed to always say exactly what a girl was wishing he would. There was a tender way he lingered over helping with one's wrap, a certain gentle firmness, a caress in itself in the manner he pressed—not shook—a lady's hand. The profound deference and humbleness with which he treated women threw them off their guard, and the audacious things he did passed unnoticed. It was Miss Mary Philipse, however, whom he alternately honored and flouted.

Esther—looking like a slender young god—stepped the first minuet with Mrs. Myers, while Mary sat pouting, George utterly ignored at her side. As for Roger Morris, who had stood in high favor hitherto, he was snubbed without mercy.

After the figure Connie sank down in a chair next the neglected damsel, fanning herself the while with a ridiculous little bit of sticks and spangles, absolutely fascinating.

"Ah, Mr. Mercer, thou flatterer, here again? I had thought to escape thee by choosing the best gallant in the room; but men are such conceited mortals, they never give up," with a languishing glance at Esther which filled every man in sight with envy.

"Weak hearted he who would give up under fire, with such stakes," answered Mercer, looking keenly at Esther. He was racking his brains with an effort to remember where he had seen that face before; but Mistress Constance brought his eyes back to her by laughingly exclaiming:

"Dost love me just as much as ever?"

"Aye, that I do," he replied, so fervently that two or three misses looked up indignantly.

"One should stop flirting when one is an old married matron," declared a damsel to her gallant in a whisper.

"Now thou art outdone even in that, for Mr. Latimer swears he loves me more than thou ever hast."

"That were impossible, madam," returned Mercer, bowing; but Mary Philipse bit her lip as she joined in the laugh.

"My dear," said Mrs. Myers, as the men moved away to other partners, "thou shouldst cultivate this Mr. Latimer. He is not only marvelous rich and a man of parts, distinguishing himself, as thou hast heard in that shameful defeat of Braddock's,—dashing into the woods and slaying Indians by the hundreds,—but," impressively, "I will tell thee this, and none other.

He hath a title which he can claim with no dishonor when he chooseth."

"Lud, Mary, Mr. Latimer is a beauty," sighed Miss Philipse's best friend enviously, "and of course 'tis you who have carried him off, just as you always do."

All this was calculated to make Mr. Latimer of vast importance, and caused her to watch eagerly for the gleam of his satin coat about the hall.

At last, almost at the end of the evening, when she had quite despaired of his asking her even to dance, Esther came swinging easily across the room, one white ring-shining hand resting on her sword hilt.

As she sat down beside her she was dimly conscious that Mrs. Myers swooped down and bore George off somewhere, and there was a truly new and delightful whirling sensation in the young lady's hitherto very level little head.

Mr. Latimer found innumerable minute things to admire about Mistress Mary's person. The very rosette which she had planned to fascinate the beaux, and which not one had noticed; and every patch and curl was dilated upon.

"Ah, Mistress Mary," he said softly, "thou art wonderful, wonderful, glorious." His tone was dreamy, his eyes seemed to feed upon her,

lingering on every line till it was as if he touched her.

As they rose to dance she found herself being quietly led into the drawing-room, nor did she notice two forms seated in the shadow. The candles had burned low, and the room was but dimly lighted.

"Don't you think it's—it's a little dark in here?" Ye Gods! was this the society belle, the accomplished Miss Philipse who held in thrall such men as George Mercer, Washington, and Morris? When woman meets woman, then is one absolutely deceived.

"Jove! is not thy face enough to lead a man through the darkness of hell itself? Ah, I'm not myself to-night. 'Tis a kind of madness which has come upon me since I saw thee, heard thee—oh, Heaven!—touched thee."

Then with the guilelessness of any school miss quoth Mistress Philipse:

"But thou hast been away from me all the evening."

"Yes, I have held myself away because I could not trust myself near thee. I was fighting with what I felt. I was afraid I might do—this!" and the doughty little gallant imprinted a fervent kiss on the dimpled shoulder next him, albeit shockingly near the neck.

"Oh, Mr. Latimer! thou art—" But the rest of the sentence was inarticulate, for Esther, with murmuring that would have done credit to Lord Byron or Charles II, had pressed my lady's head roughly against her breast, and fell to kissing hair, ear, throat,—everything but the lips, until they were offered voluntarily.

George sprang to his feet, despite Mistress Connie's efforts, which had hitherto been scarcely effectual in keeping him quiet. And he would have made an awkward scene had not his little manager said shrilly:

"I wonder if there is any one in here?"

It was now Mr. Morris's turn, and Esther led her blushing partner into a group of gallants who were only too glad to gather around, each vying for a smile or even a look from the popular heiress.

Roger had thought out a jest of his own, and coming up behind the would-be chevalier, put one arm about her neck as men sometimes do in groups.

"Here, keep thy elbows to thyself, man," objected she. And, with a roguish glance, "When I'm so put to that I have to embrace *thee,* I shall put on petticoats. I have other ambitions." This last with a look at Miss Philipse which set all the others to clapping.

"Ah, when I see my ambition so near, and yet so far, I would embrace a stovepipe if it were close by," retorted Roger. Esther bridled, and when her glance again encountered Sir Morris, sparks flew; but she had her revenge.

"Mistress Philipse, he soundeth well, but thou shouldest have seen him last summer with my sister Faith, to hear him vow eternal love and devotion,—bah,—and prate of expectations, hint that her dot was not the cause for his wooing; but Gad, she would not have him as a gift."

"So thou art giving him away to Mistress Mary," put in Mrs. Myers at her elbow. With this the party broke up, for the guests were leaving. Esther, being a stranger, found herself surrounded by young sparks anxious to give the traveler, who had run such a plucky race and was sought by women of every type, a rousing good time.

Connie drew her aside, while several knowing ones winked, and whispered that Mr. Myers was in England, dear man.

"O Esser," she said, looking with frightened eyes up into Esther's smiling face, "they are going to insist that thou shalt go with them. Art not awfully scared? Oh, dear, what *wilt* thou do now?"

"My dear Connie, I was never bolder in my

life. I begin to see what makes women cowards. 'Tis their conscious weakness and the great trust which nature gives them to guard. Take that fear away and they are bolder far than any. Besides, I have been bred in the close companionship of men. I do not fear them. Even the roughest here are not as crude and profane as Captain Jack's band. I shall slip away, however, at my first opportunity—say a duel or—"

"O Shen, thou *wouldst not!*"

"Aye, why not? Think thee I have practiced two and three hours each day with Lord Fairfax for naught? But do you detain George on any pretext till I have left, lest he make a scene." But here she was obliged to join the others who were bent on going the rounds.

They stopped first at Morris's lodgings. Cards were brought and Esther won steadily; so much so, that the men forgot to quit the table, hoping their luck would change and that they would rewin at least half their losings. At last one of the younger players grew angry. Wishing to kick some one and being a suitor for Mistress Philipse, he said sneeringly:

"I wonder which fair Indian taught this mighty Washington man to flatter the fair?"

The pack of cards lay scattered on the floor, and their marks against the speaker's cheek. All

was instantly confusion; the others declaring they would "see it through then and there, 'twas good sport"; Esther standing with a half-smile, her heart pounding and pulses beating double-quick, hoping that this would put an end to her being longer detained; Morris interfering and expostulating frantically.

There was finally a compromise. Mr. Latimer would give satisfaction—if Mr. Washington did not fight his own battle first—on the morrow. Meantime it was suggested they should adjourn to other quarters.

As they filed out Morris said gravely:

"A word with Mr. Latimer."

Esther, seated on the table, watched him close the door. A thousand little demons lurked in her eyes and dimples, for she was reckless with the jealousy and disappointment at her heart, and would not have cared one whit how she might appear, even had she realized the impropriety of her position—which she did not.

"Well?" she demanded, tossing her head, all the feminine again.

Morris turned on her in a rage.

"'Tis not well! 'Tis ill, disgraceful, shocking! Thou art a misguided little idiot, Shen. 'Tis true thou hast no living soul to look after thee,—Constance being a fool and Sir Denis a

doting old man,—but even thy untutored sense must see the shamefulness of this. If thou dost not, I do, and I will put a stop to it."

"Pooh! Some one else would cut thee out, then."

"Where, for instance, wilt thou stay the night?" he went on, choosing not to hear this thrust.

"Why dost wish to know that? Odds life, 'tis naught to thee, sir." Her eyes sparkling black by the candlelight, and lips of luring witchery mocking him.

"Mistress Esther, I would have you know I am not jesting."

"But I am."

"Listen to me. For God's sake, Shen, art crazed?"

"Nay, not very," she answered, and there came a look of unhappiness over the oval face which touched even Morris, angry as he was.

"Why have you done this?" he queried kindly, pausing in his restless pacing to and fro, and looking at her.

The strain of excitement had been great, and the fair macaroni began to cry. Now that was *one* thing against which Roger Morris was never proof.

"There, there," he exclaimed penitently. "Don't do that; cheer up; be a man!"

This made Esther laugh as well as cry, which frightened him mightily.

"Oh, please don't; don't do that. Here, you take these lodgings to-night. I'll put up somewhere, anywhere in town, and you stay right here, see, poor little girl," he said as Esther slipped wearily into a chair, and he rather clumsily stroked her forehead. "Well, I suppose I must go," he said, looking ruefully about at his comfortable lodgings and wondering vaguely if it would be proper to get anything from the next room.

"Good-night," she breathed gratefully. "I thank thee so much."

"Heavens! I'm still in thy debt. Who took care of me those long nights and days when Loyd and I lay wounded and delirious at Fort Cumberland after the terrible ninth of July?" He paused, looking down at her. The long, straight lashes lay on her flushed cheeks where a few tears still glistened. Her mouth had a pathetic little droop and the tiny ringlets, stealing from beneath the white wig, clung damp and alluring to her forehead.

"What a thing to love!" he thought. "Why not give up Miss Philipse's wealth and ambition?

No," he muttered as he stumbled down the stairway, "I need the money."

Esther was absolutely worn out. Dimly conscious she was alone, she fell sound asleep. The candles burned out and died with a sputter. All was dark save a few embers on the hearth.

It might have been an hour before some one came upstairs and entered without knocking.

"Hello, Roger; turned in? I have come to ask you to help me find Shen."

Startled from sleep, Esther cried out:

"Who is it? Go out, please."

George knew that voice only too well, and he felt a sudden wave of comprehension sweep over him. Shuddering from head to foot, he fled down the stairs and out into the night, to pace the streets, holding his fingers clenched behind him, a longing to kill surging in him; but his all-ruling sense of justice held his hand. It was not Morris's fault. It was she had sought Roger out. What a fool he had been, he told himself, not to have seen it long ago. It was a night of complete disillusionment, and filled with bitterness.

Oddly enough, his love for Esther, which had recently lain dormant, seemed a great and fierce thing, and the loss of it a tragedy.

Next morning Washington had left New York for the South.

# CHAPTER XV

## 1758

*"And often did beguile me of her tears*
*When I did speak of some distressful stroke*
*That my youth suffered. My story being done,*
*She gave me for my pains a world of sighs;*
*She swore in faith, 'Twas strange, 'twas passing strange.*
*'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful';*
*She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished*
*That Heaven had made her such a man, she thanked me;*
*And bade me if I had a friend that loved her,*
*I should but teach him how to tell my story*
*And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake.*
*She loved me for the dangers I had passed;*
*And I loved her that she did pity them.*
*This only is the witchcraft I have used."*

*—Shakespeare.*

"Martha, I am all in a flutter. Mr. Chamberlayne has just sent a boy ahead to say that the great Mr. Washington is to be here for dinner. You know whom I mean." The woman addressed as Martha rose from caressing a small terrier, and answered laughingly:

"Silly. Why, you are as excited as a girl. Now let thy noble better half beware."

"Peace, foolish pate. 'Tis *you* who should be primping. I vow, Martha, 'tis time you fixed upon some capable young fellow, with a business head, who could look after your vast estates and help you bring up your children, especially Jack, who needs a full-grown man to

thrash him every day in the week. There is Roddy, married six times and scarce sixty, and Julia has buried three husbands. Whoever heard of a pretty rich widow in Virginia remaining free for three years. Jemminy!"

"Well, I'm open to all offers," replied Martha, with a shrug, raising her rather heavy straight eyebrows.

"Pooh! Whitehall is crowded with lovers."

"Aye, but not one of them is the man I *love,*" retorted the widow, striking a mock attitude, hand on heart.

"Bah, Martha, art a child? Hast not had enough of love and romance? Be sensible, you stubborn little piece. I tell you this Mr. Washington is the very man for you. Young, vigorous, and conscientious, he will take care of you and your money all your life, and then marry some light-headed chit and pine for you all the rest of his. Mark what I say. With his consequence, talents, and push combined with your wealth and broad acres, he will be the first man in Virginia. And remember, my dear, his family is as good as yours, for all that he lived in a little frame hut as a boy and went to a country school. The De Wessingtons were great men."

As she finished, the subject of their conversation galloped up with Mr. Chamberlayne; and

when he had dismounted easily, bowing to the ladies, Mr. Chamberlayne introduced Mistress Custis as—

"My friend, Martha Dandridge—that was, of whom we have just been talking."

"So charmed," murmured George, bestowing a look of frank admiration on the plump figure of the dame, who ran a dimpled hand over her tightly smoothed hair.

At table George talked well.

"'Tis a crying shame, Mr. Chamberlayne!" he exclaimed earnestly, "this treatment of the voluntary troops. They have neither tents, arms, nor field supplies; nothing, in fact, which the Colonies ought to give them. I have written again and again. My letters are ignored. Thank Heaven, St. Clair has sent me to Williamsburg at last! I surely hope I may make some impression on this heavy council. At least, I shall force a definite answer. Why, we will never see Duquesne at this rate!"

"Don't be too hard on the council, Mr. Washington," objected his host. "You must remember it is filled—like every large body—with factions and petty personal aims which prevent it from doing what it really wishes."

"Zounds!" cried Washington impatiently. "When will men learn to act independently of

their own feelings and desires? Why can't they lay aside such considerations and act as Virginians, as councilmen, not individuals; do what is sensible and best for both of us?"

Martha's eyes met those of her confidante and councilor across the table.

After dinner Mrs. Custis—who by the merest accident was standing near George—remarked with that subtle shyness peculiar to widows of a certain type:

"Art fond of views, Mr. Washington?"

"Aye, especially such a fair prospect as I behold at present," he replied mechanically, glancing first at her and then at the door; for Bishop—Braddock's old servant—was already in waiting.

"As you ride out, look to the west and I think you will see the rarest in the world."

"Why," said Washington, surprised; "if we go as we came there is nothing but woods."

"Oh," she returned, opening wide her dark hazel eyes, "that is the other drive, of course."

"Perhaps you would do me the honor of accompanying me while I look at it," suggested Washington uneasily, desperately regarding his restless steed without.

"Oh, no, you must be going soon. Why, see! your horse is already at the door."

"Nay, I insist," protested George, who denial

always goaded, and he proceeded to bend every energy to persuade the little lady to take a walk. "There, I have sent him back to the stable with orders not to return this afternoon, so perhaps you will believe me when I say I am not going."

"Fie, Mr. Washington! you were a naughty man to do that, indeed you were," scolded she, vastly pleased; and gathering her orange skirts away from a very slender ankle peeping out from a fluff of laces, she prepared to descend the steps of the porch.

The afternoon seemed to fly through. For the first time in his life, George talked of himself, his ambitions, successes, and disappointments. He told her of the old schoolhouse where he had learned the first principles of practical knowledge with old Hobby, the aged master; of the religious, high-minded mother from whom he had learned morality and integrity. Indeed, so much did he tell her, that he began to feel 'twas a foam of deceit to hold aught back, and blushed guiltily when she softly put the question:

"And what is *she* like? Nay, do not protest," she went on gaily, "I know that no officer so handsome, accomplished, and dashing could escape thus long."

Then as the old memory surged into his face

and "his heart's sad secret blazed itself," she laid a sympathetic hand on his shoulder.

"Ah, Mr. Washington, I too have loved and lost. You need not speak—I understand."

"Nay, but 'twas not that kind—'twas worse. O God!" he cried out in an agony of recollection, "if she had but died."

It took but a few feeling words from the lady to make the young fellow pour out the part of his story which related to that fatal night, although he did not deem it honorable to mention name's or Esther's disguise. He dwelt on his love and disillusionment in detail, as men do to widows; and vastly pleased he was at her dainty expressions of horror and her tender pity for his sad *"D' affaire de coeur."* Oh, these masculine martyrs, with soft bleeding hearts, who demand chastity and give neglect, judging a woman by appearances as did Othello!

"You have indeed had a hard, hard time, Mr. Washington," she sighed. "I too have suffered. Mr. Custis was not exactly what I had dreamed. We have both learned a bitter lesson, you and I. I am so happy we met; two souls bereft perhaps know best how to comfort each other."

When Bishop led around Master George's mount that evening, Mr. Chamberlayne sent him back to the stable for the night.

# CHAPTER XVI

*"His love was not a love of hours,*
*And love and lover both are flown,*
*And you walk like a ghost alone.*
*He sipped your sunny lips, and he*
*Took all the honey. Now the bee*
*Bends down the head of other flowers,*
*And other lips lift up to kiss."*

—*Miller.*

*"From a scene that saddens, from a ghost that wearies,*
*From a white isle set in a wall of seas,*
*From the kine and clover and all these,*
*I shall set my face for the fierce sierras,*
*I shall make the mates on the stormy border.*
*I shall beard the grizzley, shall battle again,*
*And from mad disorder shall mould me order,*
*And a wild repose from a weary brain."*

—*Ibid.*

It was September. Esther rode over to visit Lord Fairfax. As she guided her new mare—Constance—over the uneven, rudely cut road, lying partly along Washington's former line of march, she had an odd feeling of excitement, a restless premonition. She dreaded to reach Greenway. Lord Fairfax was a very old man, and as his death would have been a natural decree of nature, she sought to attribute her uneasiness to a fear of finding him so. For Shenandoah and the magic circle had been absent for upwards of five years, with Sir Denis as host, first on a tour of Europe, and then on a wild buffalo hunt. But this apprehension of

hers was personal. She shivered as she stood waiting in the doorway for Joe to summon her host.

The aged nobleman was overjoyed, and exclaimed that were she the angel of death she should be welcome for her fairness alone.

"Ah," he continued, beaming, "much fairer than George's bride, egad."

"Which George dost mean, my lord?" she broke in, fear stilling her heart.

"Why, George Washington, of course. Thou hast heard surely. He married one of the Dandridge girls. The wealthy widow Custis."

She stared at him wide-eyed, with the hurt look of a fresh-wounded fawn; and as a deer turns away from the flock to suffer alone, she went silently out of the house, not knowing that Lord Fairfax called to her, nor that she was there, nor indeed anything. One sentence only, "murdered her," and mocked through the masses of color about her—brown, orange, green, and in the distance pale grays and violet blues, where the clouds let down a veil of misty ozone.

The path she trod was heavy with dead leaves, and the forest sighed every time a new shower drifted from it to die at its feet.

"Yoh jes' cl'ar outen heah! Lan'! what yoh

alus pester'n' me foah? Wall, bress my heart! Yoh certain' has been 'way long nuff, Woolsey, jas' ridin' to Winchester an' back. Come in heah. I got somethin' to tell yoh. Drat dat chickun! Shoo!"

"Well, hurry up wid yoh tellin' 'kase I's hungry an' sleepy an' wore out."

"It's bouten Miss Essa. 'Round two o'clock she done sa'nter in from somewhar' lookin' kinder *wile*-like, an' gits on tail-sticken-up, an' rides off, sayin' nuffin'. She alus wuz quare chile. Debbil?—my, she war debbil. When she war lil' she use' to steal my shoes an' aprun ev'y day, and laugh fit to bust."

So Mammy Lucy, in the big kitchen, standing before the huge iron pot hanging on its grimy black crane. Ever and anon she would open one of the ovens built into the wall on either side of the fireplace, and peek in at a pan of beaten biscuits designed for "Miss Essa's dinnah."

But "Miss Essa" was never to eat those especial biscuits. Riding toward the camp of the Delawares, Shenandoah had a look in her eyes strangely like the savage maidens of the tribe. Her cheeks were flushed and her mouth was determined. She was bent on a definite purpose.

As she pulled her horse up to let him drink,

she heard a familiar voice singing, and peering through the thicket nearest her, saw Don seated cross-legged on a gnarled log, his face wearing an intently absorbed expression. As he listened her mouth twitched and she bowed her head.

"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu'o care?
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird
That wantons throu' the flow'ring thorn.
Thou mind'st me of departed joys,
Departed never to return.
Aft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine,
And ilka bird sang o' its love,
And fondly sae I did o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Full sweet upon its thorny tree,
And my fause luver staw my rose,
But ah, he left the thorn with me."

But the last notes died unheard, for Esther was riding on, faster than ever, towards Keneu's tent on the border of the camp. Once there, she dismounted, and seated herself on a bearskin near the fire.

Keneu sat by the pile of leaves and deer-skins which marked his couch. He was indeed a splendid form. Constant contact with white men of the better sort had taught him many things which most Indians lacked—cleanliness, neatness of garb, modesty of attire, and absence

of paint. As he sat there, one strong hand on his knee, the other spread out palm down on the leaves beside him, his great shoulders resting against a prop of the wigwam, he looked a goodly man enough, all sinew and muscle and vitality. There was something, too, almost commanding in his profile; the well shaped nose, and the mouth that smiled in welcome, for Indians smile often when with friends. Nor was the smile unpleasing, for it held the gentleness of love, "the love of a slave that serves," and the teeth were even, sharp and very white.

"Keneu," began Esther slowly,—she spoke without heat, calmly,—"thou knowest—none better—my love for my pale-face brother. How deep it was and how strong. The pale-face has chosen another maiden for his hearth, another hand to rule his wigwam, and he has broken my heart, Keneu, as a man breaks a reed by a pool and casts it into the black waters. I am alone. But that is not all—my love is ever with me, chafing my soul and driving me about like a fall leaf in the mocking wind. I would be free of it, and escape out of myself; so I have come to thee, my brother, who have watched and guarded me always lovingly, and of whom I am sure, to ask thee to help me. To take me away to the prairies, out of my old life, far from all

that can remind me of him. Ah, Keneu," she cried, leaning forward, her eyes bright, "there is something in me that calls, calls me away to that wild, free world, bids me cook and plant and serve, deck myself in skins and wild furs. Aye, and lead an ever-roving, shifting life, in the moonlight and the sunlight, and," with a bitter little laugh, " 'die singing.' " She had spoken in his own language, and so he answered her, after a pause, during which they watched the leaping jets of flame 'twixt the logs.

"Shenandoah," he began evenly, "I take not the body without the heart. Thou hast none for me. Big Chief has it, Connolancarius. Go find him; bring him to thy brothers, the red men. Take him to the land of the Kabeyum. There no pale-face will find you. There only thou wilt have thy Nenemoosha, thy Algonquin. The pathway of ghosts above you, the great prairies around you, and the cry of the Wanwonaissa. There thou wilt find thy heart."

"But, Keneu, they have taken him away. He is hers, hers forever. I can not steal him even if I would."

"Go ask; he come."

"But he can not, canst not understand? He has given himself to her."

The Indian shrugged his shoulders, a habit he had from Jean.

"Maybe yes, but they can not give his heart; that is not his. It is buried out there where he left Shenandoah."

"But there is law, law that does not know of hearts, nor even reckon them, which binds a man to woman."

"Heap little law out West," returned Keneu, stoically.

Esther rose, and went thoughtfully out to Adjidaimo. Resting her folded arms upon his back and her chin upon them, she looked away over the rugged road to where the Owaissas and their feathered brothers fluttered unlicensed, happy, a law unto themselves. What a strong, anomalous character was this forest-bred Indian. Had she been one of his tribe he would have bargained for her coolly, or would have wrested her from some other savage sweetheart, scalping him before her very eyes. But Keneu knew that this was not the code of her people—the pale-faces—and pride made him to wish to gain all the pale-face wife gave. In this hour of wretchedness and heartache she found herself dryly moralizing. She though of what Dr. Craik had once told her of the Indian's horror and disgust regarding autopsy. Yet on the field

of battle they scalped the victims, dead or alive, with ecstasy.

She looked up and saw Keneu beside her. Then without warning he raised her to the horse's back, and guiding the animal to the turning which lead toward Alexandria, said simply, "Go." And with a sudden resolution she went—went toward Mount Vernon and Washington.

Washington passed through one of the three doors opening from the front of his mansion. He walked with his head bowed over his ruffled neckcloth, and his arms were folded over a long vest which reached below the hips; but his dress was unusually simple for a man of wealth, despite the frills at neck and wrists. He stood a moment, watching a gay little barge glide up the Potomac below him.

"Mr. Digges," he murmured absently as the boat drew nearer. It was rowed by six negroes who wore checked shirts and black velvet caps. The whole was a pretty thing to watch, skimming through the smooth waters of the river, dyed crimson as the autumn hills beyond, by the mellow glow of sunset. A deer peeped shyly from the bushes near him, and then bounded away to answer the cry of its fawn. George turned suddenly, with drawn lips, and walked

toward his garden. His garden—what did it not mean to him! He delighted in its constant supervision. Something of the military it had, with its straight-cut beds, English in plan and outline; neat figures of tulips, pinks, puplinis, and flowering almond, all looking—as English gardens do—as though some marvelously neat kindergarten class had cut them out of colored paper and pasted them on green cards. But then, even if the Anglo-culture is lacking in the artistic and picturesque disorder and bigness of the Spanish garden, still it has its sundials, peacocks, and granite and marble seats.

He left the greenhouses and strolled in the direction of Mount Vernon itself. Passing through rows of square-clipped box he paused at last by a few small trees, acorns and buckeye nuts. Well he recalled the day she had given their seeds to him, her eyes dancing with love, mischief and mockery.

"Take them," she had said, "and when—" But something crashed through the box near him. The next moment he held her to him and their lips met in the old soul-awakening unity. Then they broke from each other.

"God! What have we done?" said Washington brokenly, passing a hot hand before his eyes.

"George dear!" The voice was wondrously sweet, and the two turned to find the speaker coming toward them through the gloaming. Very pure and stately too she seemed, despite her littleness, as she stood looking kindly at the slender boy-stranger, a half smile on her small, full mouth. There was a pause. Then Esther bent over the tapered fingers held out to her, and her voice was quite clear as she said:

" 'Tis a pleasure to find George's mistress so marvelous pleasing, Madam."

"Ah, you are old friends, I surmise. I saw you holding each other like a pair of girls. George often does so with his dearest friends, he is so big and strong," she ended admiringly, tucking the hand Esther had kissed through Washington's arm, while he stood dumb, not knowing how to unravel this terrible dilemma, as it seemed to him.

"But you must both come in to supper. George, your tea will be quite cold. He is so fond of tea, Mr.—"

"Blackridge," Esther put in quickly.

"And he is always wandering off just at meal-time. Sometimes I think he is planning to capture Canada with a popgun, and turn it into little farms with free negroes all working for love; and I'm sure he could if he tried," she added,

beaming adoration and confidence into her husband's face.

"I will sup, but may not stay the night," said Esther, shaking her head as Mrs. Washington expostulated. Pausing, Shenandoah filled a glass of apple toddy from the bowl which stood always at the door.

"To George's wife and sweetheart! May you live long and lovingly!" she cried, and drained the goblet. Was it for a toast, or to steady her nerves?

At supper there were a number of guests, and Esther was the life of the party, telling anecdotes of Italy, Spain, Paris, and dearest of all, England. How Madam L. had told my Lord H.,—a terrible old toper,—that he smelled horribly of the bottle; and he had replied, undaunted by her ladyship's exemplary attitude, "Take some yourself, Madam; take some yourself. After you have had three or four you won't mind shmell."

Indeed, even Washington, torn as he was by mingled wrath and pain, was made to laugh at her odd descriptions and apt quotations.

After the cloth was removed the guests, as usual, sat at the board for some time talking. It was long before the others that Shenandoah rose to leave. Washington of course accom-

panied his guest to the horse which stood pawing and chafing on the gravel beyond the tall white pillars of the porch. Despite all he would have said, his very wrath and emotion kept him silent.

"Thinkest thou," she observed a little sneeringly, "that I came East to kiss thee, George Washington? Nay, I have enough pride at least to let me leave a man's wife his kisses. I came to tell thee what once thou wouldst not have believed—nor may not yet for aught I know. The night I called to thee through the darkness there was no one with me. Roger had given up his lodgings, that I might rest in safety; and being tired I fell asleep by the table ere I bolted the door; but he had gone an hour. What—thou believest me? *Sacre!* methinks thy exceeding trust and faith comes but late," and vaulting into the saddle she was gone, with a sweet, mocking laugh, which brought back another white-pillared porch, and a soft rose against his mouth.

Washington turned, stumbled back to the garden, and hid his face in the cool, dew-covered grass.

# CHAPTER XVII

*"But she heeded not the warning,*
*Heeded not the words of wisdom,*
*And the west wind came at evening,*
*Walking lightly o'er the prairie,*
*Whispering to the leaves and blossoms,*
*Bending down the flowers and grasses,*
*Found the beautiful Wenonah*
*Among the lilies."*

—*Longfellow.*

Washington sat writing. It was still dark without, though the dawn was dimly visible toward the east. It was not the red-cheeked George of 1748 who turned over the records on Washington's desk early that morning. His face was grave even to grayness. His mouth seemed to set itself determinedly to keep from drooping, and the flickering light of the taper showed little shadows about the eyes.

"Yes, Billy, what is it?" he said, looking up wearily as the black entered.

"Two lettahs, sah. Come last night, sah, 'bout ten 'clock, afer yoh had gone ter sleep. Yes, sah."

Washington took them rather indifferently, and laying aside one he knew to be from the Governor, looked the other one over, puzzling. After he had torn it open and begun to read,

however, his face twitched and he gazed at the paper as though he was trying to fathom a dark chasm. Indeed it was a letter to make any one sad who had ever known the bright, lovely girl beyond the Shenandoah.

"Dear old George:

"I am writing to thee because we are in terrible trouble out here. I am going to tell thee word for word just how it happened from the very first.

"Of course it is principally about the little girl. You haven't seen fit to confide in me about your smashup, for that there has been one is very plain. Sir Denis said thou wert tempted away by a large fortune, but I'm inclined to think thou hast taken to marriage as a less abstemious youth might to the bottle.

"About two weeks ago Shen rode over to see Lord Fairfax and heard, what we none of us knew, that thou hadst sought consolation. It hit her awfully hard. Love, pride, that sort of thing all busted up. She came back looking sort of queer, so Aunt Lucy says, then rode off God knows where.

"I have known Shen ever since she first began to lie down on the floor and scream

herself sick because she couldn't have the moon. She was always just that way, and we all spoiled her and let her have her will in everything. She has a wonderfully big heart and loved us all very much, Sir Denis first in the world I think; and before she met thee I used to think I came next. Ah, well. When I got in the day she left I found Sir Denis looking sort of rackey. He never grumbled much, but he looked like thunder. I sent for old Riggs, a doctor who has always lived out here since I can remember. After he had looked the Duke over and we were alone Riggs said:

" 'Loyd, where's Shen?'

" 'God knows,' I answered.

" 'Well, get on thy horse, boy, and ride hard to find her, lest she be too late to say good-by.'

"I was awfully cut up myself, and wanted to be with the Duke to the last, for he had always been a father to me; but I didn't stop to say two words, just jumped on the first horse I could find and started toward Bellevue. Well, I met the girl about forty miles east. Thou knowest I never could break a thing gently, and I guess I told her sort of suddenly, for she took it

awfully hard. We rode fast, but Mammy Lucy met us at the outer gate and she didn't have to speak.

"I had to help Shen off. She gave out on the steps, and all she could say was, 'Is this my home, is this the Temple?'

"The boys were all there, and 'twas rough old Captain Jack who did her the most good. After a while she went into the room where It lay. Woolsey was there, crying, with a huge red handkerchief, and old Lord Fairfax kneeling.

"We couldn't get her away, and Aunt Lucy went down and cooked a kind of cake she used to love as a child, and brought it up, with the tears running down her black cheeks into the plate. Then I gave her the letter he had left. I don't know that I should have done it, but Riggs said, *anything* to get her mind off It's face, and I knew that would.

"You see Sir Denis had a sort of an affair in England, and came over here ready for anything. He had a grant from the Crown and some money. He hadn't been here long before he married a Delaware, a sachem's daughter. She died in a year and left him a son, his very image. He

was wild about the boy, and brought him up to have every whim. Then he sent the fine youngster abroad to finish off. The lad took degrees, all that kind of thing, and then calmly eloped with a young French countess, without even saying by your leave. That wasn't so bad, and pleased the old Duke mightily,—thou wilt understand that is only my pet name for Sir Denis,—and he sent word to have the young people come over to comfort his old age. The boy was delighted, but had to stay a year or so in England to settle a lawsuit for his father. When he finally did sail, it was with a baby girl—Esther. The ship foundered. The wife and child were saved; but when the young French bride heard that her husband was in the waves she ran along the shore and fell, jumped, what thou likest, over a cliff. The baby was kept awhile amongst the fisher people, where it found a foster-mother, who finally managed to communicate with Sir Denis and the child was sent to the Temple.

"So much for the letter. Now we know why Shen could speak three languages so easily, and why she could endure so much hardship—run, ride and shoot like a Dela-

ware. I can not see why we did not guess it long ago. Shagress, Mammy Lucy and Woolsey were the only ones who knew it.

"I would that this were everything, but I have the worst still to write. About four o'clock, Esther called Dr. Riggs, and he came out a bit shaky.

" 'Loyd,' he whispered, 'I have looked many times on the face of death and have not been afraid; but just now I have looked on the death of a soul and I was frightened.

"So was I. When Shen began to laugh and ask for thee, George, I had to hold on to myself to keep sane.

"George, there is just one thing that will save her, 'tis thee. Thy name is all she says, save at times she cries, seeming to remember Sir Denis, 'They will take him down the stairs.'

"In plain English, Will ye come?

Thy old pal,

"Loy.

"P. S.—We are in constant fear lest she escape us. She seems to have gone back to the Indians somehow, and is a wild creature of the woods. Heaven only knows what she might do."

Washington paced the room blindly. Then to quiet himself, picked up the other letter. It was a confidential note and ran:

"You are doubtless well acquainted with the slackness of the Provincial government in not paying up certain debts of land, which are owing to Soldiers and Officers who had engaged to serve until peace. They were to have—you will remember—200,000 acres of land, to be divided by rank.

"Now the Six Nations have, by this treaty of 1768, ceded to the Crown, all lands possessed by the Indians, South of the Ohio. It seems to me that this territory, lying as it does, in the disputed section these soldiers fought to defend, should form the bounty. To bring this about, it is necessary for some one, familiar with the parties concerned; some one whom we could trust, to mark out this land, and set our seal upon it.

"But this is not so easy as it may appear. The Delawares, Shawnees, and Mingoes are dissatisfied. They say their Red Brothers have cheated them out of some treaty money; and these three tribes purpose

making up their loss by murdering and robbing those who attempt to settle in the neighborhood. Several outrages have already been noted. So you perceive the expedition will be a lively one.

"In short, I am writing this to you privately, to beg you will not fail to answer this call when it comes; not that you ever do where you feel you are needed, but I feared you might not be aware how impossible it would be to fill your place."

So destiny had decided: a weight seemed lifted from him. God appeared to point his course out to him, and he sat down to write Loy and Dr. Craik; to them he said he was starting on the fifth of October for the West.

As George rode over the old familiar trail his mind was confused. He felt a throbbing at his heart, an aching in his temples. He seemed to hear Esther's voice calling from the carmine woods about him, and the exhilaration of the clear autumn days filled him with a kind of madness, a fury against the dictates of a fate which drove him to her, and forbade him to take her back when he went.

Lying at night in the wonderful misty dream-

light of the moon, he heard the beasts of the wilderness calling, and their cries stirred him, awakening an echo in his very soul; and the life which surges through nature filled him, and his mind, with strange flitting visions, visions of a sunny sea, a bower amongst the green, where a maiden sat and smiled through long brown tresses—for him; and sang—for him; and worked and lived and loved—for him!

The more he fought down these things, the more his inward yearning grew, until he half-feared to go to her, lest—and his head reeled with the thinking of it.

So the days passed, till one night they camped not two miles from the Temple. He decided to walk over, as the horses were badly knocked up, and told Dr. Craik to wait—unless he sent word he would be back in the morning.

As he swung along under the whispering trees, sounds of the forests seemed to thunder in his ears; the deep shadows to hold a host of memories. There were vivid groups of stars above him—"the-pathway-of-ghosts," and the cry of the Wanwoniassa, with its incessant sweetness, answered ever and anon by its mate across the tree tops. Suddenly Washington stopped, quivering. Through the clear air came a cry, unlike anything he had ever heard—a call that made

his pulses stop an instant, and then madly leap on. Again it came, bitter sweet. It was uncanny, unreal, and yet 'twas human, very human. Then, as he stood throbbing, Esther came through the path of moonbeams; nor did he wonder she was there. He only knew that she was coming to him, with that wild cry on her parted lips, and that weird alluring look in her wide eyes, and he could no more have helped going to her than the river to the sea.

# CHAPTER XVIII

*"Shall I kill myself.*
*What help in that? I can not kill my shame,*
*Nor can I kill my sin.*
*No, nor by living can I live it down.*
*The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,*
*The months will add themselves and make the years,*
*The years will roll into the centuries,*
*And mine will ever be a name of scorn."*

*—Tennyson.*

When Esther awakened, conscious of her surroundings for the first time in weeks, Isabelle was seated on the corner of the bed, and announced the fact to Keneu, who mounted at once and rode off to tell Loyd, who was at home giving a few cursory glances at his long-neglected affairs.

Isabelle looked down at her mistress and shook the black braids now piled high on the drooping head.

"Poor Esther, poor Esther," murmured Clochette sadly. Now Esther had never been called "poor" in all her life, and she looked up rather resentfully at the speaker and asked:

"What meanest thou?" Upon which Clochette saw fit to weep and look very mysterious. "Do tell me, what is it all about?" cried Shen, really alarmed and sitting up, despite a very aching head.

"Oh, I may not tell thee. Thou shouldst not know," sobbed the emotional halfbreed, in her element, and feeling vastly important.

"Tell me," said Esther, very calmly, in a tone she could assume at times, which silenced the other's tears. And, in bits artfully distributed, Esther learned all that Clochette knew and much more. Washington had been seen by Keneu the night Esther had been missing. The Indian had said the "Big Chief was crying like a squaw." She did not know if Loy had seen Washington or not. There was something terribly strange about it all, anyway.

Esther walked up and down the room, staggering a little, partly from weakness and partly from the inward dread that filled her. What had she done, where had she been that night she had stolen out alone?

At last there came a horse's galloping without; but 'twas Keneu with a note. Full of apprehension, she tore it open, much delayed by weak, trembling fingers:

"Dearest Shen (wrote Loyd):

"Since the dear old man went away I have been watching over thee somewhat, and 'twas good, Heaven knows, to be with thee. But now thou art quite alone, dost

> think I should go to the Temple at night? Hang it all, Shen, I will ride over in the morning, right or wrong.
>
> "Loy."

Then weakening at the end good old Loy adds timidly,

> "Thou knowest I leave it entirely with thee, Shen."

This letter made Esther feel more than ever alone. It placed Loyd, in an instant, in the position he had been striving to attain all her life—of the man, a lover, who must be treated with something like convention.

She was very wretched. A restless grief and uncertainty, a fear—of she knew not what—was upon her. Isabelle had stolen out, frightened at what her vindictive jealousy had a second time accomplished.

With knotted fingers Esther sat or walked about her room, until finally she grew half-frantic with a kind of nervous terror; and as when a child she had run to Loyd with a cut finger, now she longed for him. There alone in her room she learned to know herself. She could not bear the thought of Washington. Sir Denis was dead, Ren and Jack were well enough—but

Loy, she wanted him, his comforting hand on her fevered forehead, and merry words of assurance.

About eleven she sat down and poured out all her fears, misgivings and loneliness in a letter. All her little tragedy was laid bare, without an attempt at glossing over. Things were more plainly said in those days, and Esther was in a desperate mood.

Then, shaking Caesar out of a heavy sleep, she sent the negro off on a swift mount with the letter to Loyd, who was trying, harder than he had ever tried in his life, to keep still and wait until morning.

No sooner had she sent the letter than she wished it back. Why had she told him, and given him this shameful suspicion which Isabelle had instilled into her weakened brain? She did not wish him to think ill of her. Why not keep this last heart? She fell to crying, her head on her arms; but even as the tears came she caught the pounding of hoofs without, and heard Loyd's cheery "Where is she?" below.

The note of singing happiness in his voice brought her to her feet, and the horror and sadness of the night vanished. He was bounding up the stairs, and the door burst open. She felt his firm wind-cooled cheek against hers, and he was kissing her—aye, boldly and lovingly.

"Thou little fool!" he laughed, hugging her up close to him, and drawing a cloak about her, "thou needest some one to watch over thee. 'Tis as well I, as another. The idea!" he snorted, as he lifted her up before him on his saddle, "of *dreaming* such a thing of *George*, who loves thee better than his soul. Who put such a hellish thing into thy dear head?" He paused abruptly. "I have it! 'Tis that black-eyed she-devil yonder, whom thou hast fed, clothed and cared for all these years. She'll not stop in the house two minutes when I get back."

"Where art going, Loy?" asked Esther meekly, clinging to his big shoulder.

"*Going?* Going to get married, of course," said Loy, and his laugh mingled with the ring of the horse's hoofs which sounded clearly on the stony road leading to Parson Whitherby's, just fourteen miles away.

# CHAPTER XIX

## 1784

*"Sweet are the rosy memories of the lips*
*That first kissed ours, albeit they kiss no more.*
*Sweet is the sight of sunset sailing ships,*
*Although they leave us on a lonely shore.*

* * * * *

*There is a pleasure that is born of pain;*
*The grave of all things has its violet,*
*Else why through days which never come again,*
*Roams hope, with that strange longing like regret?"*

*—Meredith.*

In the year 1784 a gray-haired, distinguished-looking veteran, accompanied by his long-time friend and associate, Dr. Craik, rode along the shady way that led to the Temple.

There were tears in the man's eyes as he looked up at the group on the white-pillared porch of old. There stood the little queen of yore, still with her adoring court about her, ever constant and devoted. But he flushed, changing color several times, as a slender boy of thirteen years came forward and bowed gracefully. The eyes were unmistakably Esther's, with that odd trick of appealing, and rejecting the answering concession, in one. Nor did Washington meet the look of the fair mother without a tremor; for was she not his first sweetheart?—and

Loy, with his arm about the dearest woman in the world, was he not to be envied?

There was Ren with a ridiculous amount of gray in his wavy locks; and Keneu, always the Indian, but strangely imposing, Washington thought. Don, too, with the instrument so dear to his heart, and Captain Jack in his rude clothes, ever welcome.

With the odd inopportuneness of childish questions, the boy asked, looking anxiously at Washington:

"Dost not think I'm like my father, Mr. Washington?"

"Why asketh thou that? Dost not like thy mother's looks, lad?" returned George.

"Aye, she hath the most beautiful face in the world; but my father is a man. I would be like a man, and they all say I am so very like my mother."

"Thy mother was considered a very good one once," replied Washington, smiling.

The boy looked puzzled, and Esther laid a finger on her lip.

"Why sayest thou that, sir?" queried the lad, confused.

"Well, why ask *me* the question, boy?" rejoined Washington.

"Because thou wast a stranger, I thought thou

mightst know. And besides, Aunt Lucy says thou dost always tell the very truth, and every one tells me that, so I was sure thou wouldst answer me what really was."

They passed into the dining-hall at this point, and as Mistress Latimer had not forgotten what her guest most liked, nuts and tea were served to him alone.

Mammy Lucy, coyly hiding her wooly white hair under a gay turban, put it through the door and told the servants-hall that—

"'Deed, Marse Washin' am powerful sober lookin' since Miss Essa done trowed him ober."

And George forgot his envy, for Loyd was so earnest and jovial.

After the guests had retired, Shenandoah curled up on the bear's rug near the blaze, and leaned against Loyd, who sat very still in the big deerskin chair.

"Shen," he said a little sheepishly, slipping a hand over hers, "dost not think that the Colonel has aged mightily? I do not believe I have as many silver hairs, though I am older. I rather think I have come nearer to him, now we are both getting on."

This brought Esther into the chair itself, and she assured Loyd, with many kisses, stroking the

locks in question, that he was the handsomest, dearest man alive; and that she was *disgusted* to think she had *ever* cared for that *stolid,* silent Mr. Washington.

" 'Twas but a girlish fancy after all, a mere whim!" she ended, tossing her curls.

Next morning, when Washington bade farewell forever to the dear old house with all its golden memories, he took both Esther's hands in his, and said very earnestly:

"When the boy is grown a little older, wilt send him East? I could make a great general of him if there shouldst be a war."

"Oh no, Mr. Washington. I never wish him to go away from the wilderness. I wish him to grow up here with the purity of the woods and all the broadness of nature. To learn to love the fresh rich perfume of mint and grapes in the cool damp hollows by the streams. To hunt and ride and fish, and roam the rugged face of this my country, and live amongst these simple people who have no sin because they know no law."

"And marry a slender Indian maiden some day," said Washington, a little bitterly.

"Ay, perhaps; men have done worse things," she answered, looking away dreamily, and a silence fell between them.